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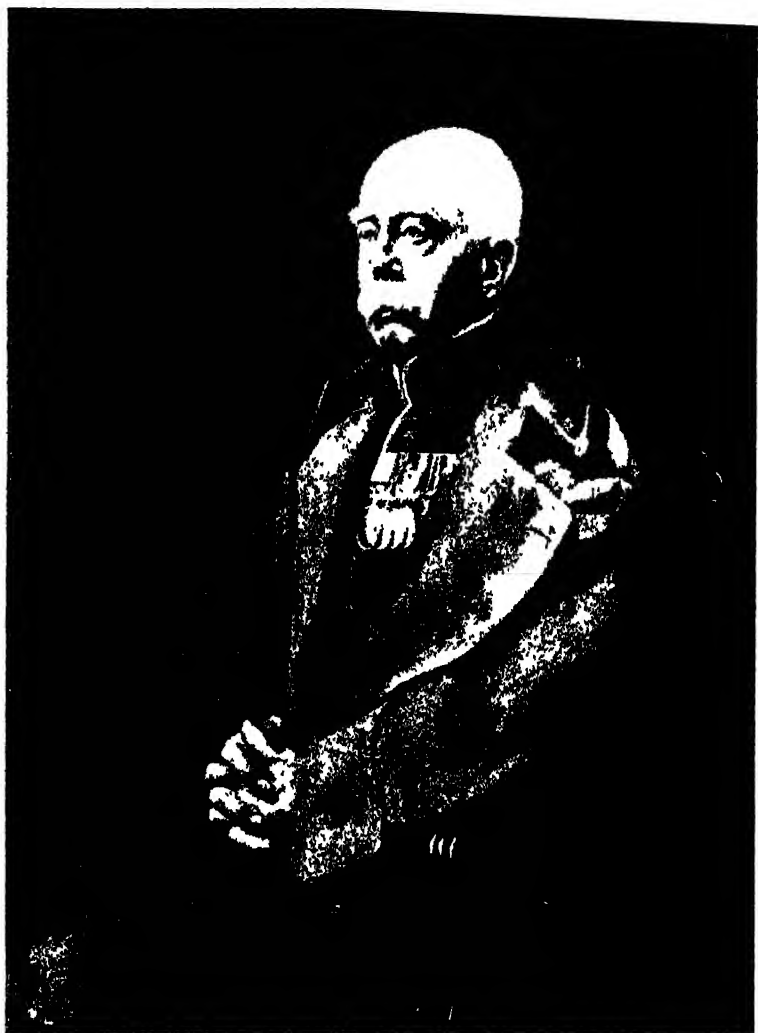
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PLUMER OF MESSINES



FIELD-MARSHAL THE VISCOUNT PLUMER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

*From the Painting by René de l'Hôpital in the possession of the
Viscountess Plumer*

PLUMER OF MESSINES

BY

GENERAL SIR CHARLES HARINGTON
G.C.B., G.B.E.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

HIS GRACE
THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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*A Facsimile of Colonel Mahon's despatch of May 11th, 1900,
to Lt.-Col. Plumer is given on pages 36 and 37.*

FOREWORD

WITH a simplicity and sincerity characteristic of Lord Plumer himself the author of this book has given an account of the personality and achievements of that great Soldier and Administrator. I can add but little to what he has written. But I deem it a privilege to be allowed in this Foreword to commend the record of a noble life and to give my own testimony to the inspiring example of a friend for whom, in common with all who knew him, I had a very real admiration and affection.

Our friendship began at York when he was appointed to the Northern Command. I well remember how on the outbreak of the War he strained at the leash which bound him to his duty at home, and how eager he was when the summons came to him to go to the front—"attired in sudden brightness like a man inspired." When for some weeks in the summer of 1917 I visited all the British Armies in France and Flanders, I was his guest at Cassel. It was shortly after the battle of Messines—perhaps the most complete single victory in the long struggle. I felt at once the atmosphere of trust and of devotion to himself which he had created around his Staff. They seemed, indeed, one proud and happy family, of which he was in his quiet and decisive way the centre. In many talks with his men, in hospital

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or trench, I realized that in the Second Army the ordinary soldiers not only knew who their Army Commander was, but had a personal feeling of loyalty towards him. They knew that "his one thought was for his men." When I accompanied him over the battlefield, the relationship between him and them was evident in his words of simple unaffected greeting and in the smile of response which even the correctness of "attention" could not conceal. When he spoke about the battle with thankfulness and pride it was always of his Staff, of his officers and men, never of himself that he spoke.

When the War was over, and he had reached an age when most men would have been glad to retire and rest, he was eager for further service. In the field of administration in Malta and Palestine he showed the same qualities which had distinguished him on the field of battle—the qualities of the man,

"Who comprehends his trust and to the same
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim."

He was just and accessible to all, always ready to listen and never afraid to decide, helped by his own directness of mind and sense of humour to see things in their right proportion, imper-turbable in temper, yet inflexible in will. Few men surely have ever achieved so much with so little regard for popularity or publicity, with such simplicity of manner and mind and heart.

On the deeper sources of this quiet strength it is needless to dwell. All who knew him at all knew that his religion was the abiding basis of his life, that he was a man who "walked humbly with his God." He went about his work, what-

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ever it was, with quiet confidence as one who had commended it to God in prayer. I remember standing at his side on the spot whence he had looked out anxiously on the Messines Ridge at the hour of "zero"—3.10 a.m.—on the morning of the battle. I did not know what Sir Charles Harington here records that immediately thereafter "he was kneeling by his bedside praying for those gallant officers and men who were at that moment attacking." That is a picture well worth remembering. His life-long service for his King and Country was inspired and guided by a constant remembrance of the higher service which he owed as a loyal soldier and servant of Christ.

This book will be of special interest to his fellow soldiers who will feel that

"This is he

That every man in arms should wish to be,"

and to the large company of his friends. But I trust that it will reach a far wider circle of readers. For in a straightforward way, perhaps the more impressive because there is no trace of mere literary artifice, it portrays the life of a great soldier, a great Englishman, and a true-hearted Christian.

COSMO CANTUAR.

PREFACE

I AM greatly honoured at having been invited by Lady Plumer to write the memoir of her late husband. I may say at once, that I have no literary qualifications for such a task and I would ask my readers to remember throughout that I have only attempted to present a picture of a great, straightforward, God-loving soldier, in the hope that his every action through life may be a help to the younger generation.

I was privileged to serve under him as Major-General, General Staff, of the Second Army for a considerable period of the Great War in the defence of the Ypres Salient, and in that position I learned the secret of his method of command which I have tried to present in simple language.

He kept no diary and but few records. Fortunately his wife had kept his letters for many years and from these it has, I think, been possible to trace the earnest and loyal devotion to duty throughout all his service which in his last years was to make him an Army Commander, beloved and trusted by all who were privileged to serve under him. After the War he might well have been entitled to rest, but he had no idea of resting whilst he could do service for his King and Country. He did five years as Governor of Malta during difficult times and proved himself such an able administrator that he was offered the post of

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Governor-General of Australia. He was forced to decline this as he could not afford it, but he became High Commissioner in Palestine shortly afterwards.

His splendid work in that capacity is dealt with elsewhere.

In 1930, he became President of the M.C.C., a position which he thoroughly enjoyed. During his year of office he endeared himself to all at Lord's and proved himself to be a most able President.

During the years since the War he took an active part in the organization of Toc H, the Ypres League, the British Church at Ypres, the British School at Ypres, the Soldiers' Daughters' House at Hampstead, the Village Centres at Enham, etc., etc.

He had a firm conviction that it was the bounden duty of everyone to work for his country as long as he was physically able to do so.

In this memoir I have tried to show that what he accomplished in life is possible to all soldiers. His career was founded on being a good regimental soldier. In that capacity he learnt the feelings of a soldier which he never forgot. Later he became Adjutant and passed through the Staff College and proved himself a good Staff Officer. He never pretended to be a man with what may be termed a brilliant brain, or a genius in any way. He just went through life doing everything thoroughly. Every action of his was based on sound common sense. He gained the confidence of those above, around and under him, looking a long way ahead and making sound and firm decisions.

He was never known to utter an unkind word

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against anyone nor would he allow anyone else to do so.

He was a very strict disciplinarian with an intense sense of loyalty. He had his set-backs in life, but he was such a true sportsman that he knew well how to take knocks and accept decisions in the right spirit.

The story of how he left the Army Council is told in these pages for the first time. It was a bitter blow to him.

That he accepted that decision and never breathed a word, never complained, never asked for anything in life, showed again his true character and did much to endear him to the Army as a whole.

He had a great sense of humour, he always had a cheery word for everyone, he was at his best when things were really bad, he was always thinking of others and never of himself and he hated every form of advertisement.

Those of us who were privileged to serve under him know well what we owe to him. In the chapters dealing with the Great War, it will be shown how he moulded us into a team. He expected nothing but the best from each one of us. As long as he was sure that we had given of our best he was always ready to forgive our faults and we knew it.

I am greatly indebted to the hundreds of kind people ranging from field-m Marshals to transport drivers and private soldiers who have sent me stories by which, owing to some words or action, they will ever remember their old Chief. I only wish that space permitted me to publish more of them. I am sure that it has been given to few men to be able to say some kind or cheery word

PREFACE

which has sunk in to such a depth, that the recipient has never forgotten the man who said it. He certainly possessed that gift.

The story of Passchendaele from the point of view of the Second Army is told in Chapter VIII. I have presented the problem exactly as it appeared to Lord Plumer at the time and I have given an account of the way in which he dealt with it. One must remember that he, unlike many post-war critics, did not know what was the other side of the hill, although our information turned out subsequently to have been amazingly correct. It has been anticipated in certain quarters that I should take this opportunity directly to refute certain charges that have been made against the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Haig, with regard to the Passchendaele operations. I have purposely not done so. That will no doubt be done by the able pen of Lord Haig's biographer. I am only concerned with relating the actions and views of Lord Plumer as I knew them, from my close association, and in correcting any misrepresentations which have been made.

My one purpose has been to present the life of a great and very lovable soldier in the hope that his example may be of use to others and especially to the younger generation.

I am sure that all my readers will agree that he played a great innings and always with a straight bat and a modest mind. He was a devout Churchman. His religion meant a very great deal to him as to other great Commanders. He was always able to go to bed every night and thank God that he had been enabled to do something during the day to help others and had never said an unkind word about anyone else, and

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this, I always think, is a good example for others to follow. That was his secret of success. He made nothing but friends and no enemies. The compiling of this book has, therefore, been nothing but a labour of love.

It does not, I hope, contain one unkind word of either the living or the dead. That would have been his wish and is certainly the wish of Lady Plumer.

I think one can safely say that he gained not only the trust and affection of all ranks of the British Army who served under him but also that of the troops of our great Dominions, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. They were all very fond of him and I have some wonderful letters testifying to this.

One of the objects of this memoir is to bring out the attributes in his character which contributed chiefly to his success. The few words on the Eton Memorial, written by the Provost, seem to sum them up—

“Throughout his life, in peace and in war, he was distinguished and beloved.”

He inspired love in all with whom he came in contact. It is hoped that the story of his life may serve as a help and inspiration to the coming generation in whom he took such a true interest.

It will be shown how, by his policy of “Be fair” he gained in later years the trust and confidence of the Maltese and subsequently of the Arabs and Jews in Palestine. All parties and denominations were the same to him. He recognized the points of view of all of them and his one purpose was to be fair and just to all. His send-

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off both from Malta and Palestine leaves no doubt upon this point.

The strain of his work in Palestine told on him, coming as it did after many years of very hard and continuous work and anxiety. He really worked himself out physically, but his brain remained active to the end.

It has, I am sure, been given to few men in our history to have given more faithful and devoted service to his King and Country than the man whom I was privileged to call "my Chief."

C. H. HARINGTON.



SIR THOMAS PLUMER

MASTER OF THE ROLLS, JANUARY 6TH, 1818, UNTIL HIS DEATH,
MARCH 25TH, 1824

*From the Painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, R.A., in the possession
of the Viscountess Plumer*

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS. REGIMENTAL LIFE

THE family of Plumer all came from Yorkshire.

The first authentic record is of one Thomas of Bedale who married Dorothy Bidihell of Bedale in 1638. They had a son William who, in his turn, had a son called Thomas who married in December, 1716, as his second wife, Alice, youngest child of Francis Hall of Lilling, Co. Yorks., by Mary, daughter of Thomas Romeby. They had a son, Thomas of Lilling Hall who had, with other issue, Sir Thomas, Kt., Master of the Rolls, who was born on 10th October, 1753, and married 26th August, 1794, Marianne, daughter of John Turton, and died 25th March, 1824, leaving with other issue, Thomas Hall Plumer of Canons, Co. Middlesex, who married in May, 1822, Anne Headland, and died December, 1852.

His second son, Hall Plumer of Malpas Lodge, Torquay, born 15th September, 1827, married on 18th May, 1854, Louise Alice Hudson, daughter of Henry Turnley of Kensington, and died 14th June, 1888, leaving by her, with other children, Herbert Charles Onslow Plumer, born 13th March, 1857.

He was born in London in Sussex Place and was sent to a preparatory school at Brighton, Mr. King's, in Upper Brunswick Place, where he stayed

EARLY DAYS

until he went to Eton in 1870. He was at Mr. Mitchell's House (always known as Mike's).

Throughout his life, his love for his old school never faltered. After the battle of Messines, amongst the many telegrams of congratulations which he received, the one he prized most was from one of his contemporaries (Streatfield) at his old House—"Well played Mikes."

This cannot be better illustrated than by quoting from a letter received by his wife after his death :

"He and I were at Mike's together and there we all loved him and in after-years watched his splendid career and were so proud of him. I shall never forget when he was in the Chair at our Old Boys' Dinner soon after the War. At the end of his speech as Chairman he stated that of all the letters and telegrams he received congratulating him on his victory at Messines, the one that pleased him most ran thus 'Well played Mike's.' He was such a loyal Etonian and never forgot his old School and House throughout his strenuous life."

He left Eton in 1876, when he was in the Sixth Form.

He was gazetted to the 65th Foot (York and Lancaster Regiment) in the autumn of 1876 and went out to join the battalion at Lucknow in the spring of 1877. His letters of those days are typical of the young officer joining a Regiment. Everything new and fresh. He soon entered into the life.

He writes later :

"The great game in the Regiment is Polo.

ENGAGEMENT

Everybody goes in for it. I expect I shall be a great muff at it."

He soon got very keen and played for the first team.

In the autumn of 1877 the Regiment moved to Dinapore.

From there he attended a Garrison Course of eight months at Ambala and obtained a First Class, passing second out of all the candidates and being specially mentioned in four subjects out of five. He was then just over twenty-two and became Adjutant in the spring of 1879.

The Regiment left Dinapore for Morar in the autumn of 1880 and moved to Aden in July, 1882.

He talks in his letters of living in a perpetual duststorm. How well I can picture it as I joined my Regiment at Aden nearly ten years later.

He got six weeks' leave to England in the summer of 1883 and became engaged to his second cousin, Annie Constance. Her father, George Goss, was Hall Plumer's first cousin.

Among the letters of congratulation which he received on his engagement was one from his great friend, Major Wolseley (afterwards General Sir George Wolseley), who had been very good to him all the time he had been in the 65th. After abusing him for getting married so young he ended up: "I will forgive the future Mrs. Plumer if she makes you go through the Staff College."

On 17th November, 1883, he describes the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught to Aden and his appreciation of the Guard of Honour furnished by the Regiment.

For weeks they had been expecting to leave Aden and on 24th February the Regiment em-

REGIMENTAL LIFE

barked on H.M.S. *Serapis*. On Saturday the 26th he writes :

“ We are now again in a state of excitement. When we left Aden we thought we were coming straight home, but just before lunch we were stopped by the *Carysfort* and told to follow her to Trinkitat, we do not know if we are to disembark.”

Later :

“ Just a line to say we have orders to disembark.”

On 2nd March he writes from the camp at Tokar :

“ Just a line in pencil to let you know I am all right. We have had a very rough time since we left the ship and a pretty hot fight the day before yesterday, February 29th. I was not touched. The Regiment suffered 7 killed and 32 wounded. Littledale was wounded but I hope is doing well. He behaved splendidly.

“ I have not attempted to tell you about the fight at El Teb. It was, as you know, my first experience. I could not give you any description of it because I was rushing about all the time. It seemed to be about half-an-hour, but I believe it really lasted about four hours or more. We marched back from Tokar on Tuesday, and did the whole march to Trinkitat that day, some 16 or 17 miles, and the last part we walked with bare feet through a swamp. We stayed at Trinkitat all Wednesday and then came on to Suakin in the *Carysfort*.

“ Before we left Trinkitat our Brigadier paraded us and made us a most flattering speech. General

EL TEB

Graham too rode up to us and said all sorts of nice things."

On the 15th March he writes :

"We had an awful battle on Thursday. I hope I may never see a scene like that again. We lost poor, dear old Ford. His body was horribly marked about when we got it, but I trust he was shot dead. Dalgety was badly wounded and I am afraid will lose his arm. We were very lucky not to have lost more officers, but we lost a lot of men, 32 killed and 22 wounded. Some of our best men. One longed to see active service, but I have seen enough to last me some time."

On board ship on his way to England he writes on the 7th April: "I have just seen General Graham's dispatch after the battle of El Teb. He speaks very flatteringly of the Regiment."

The Regiment disembarked at Portsmouth on the 21st April and was quartered at Dover in the Citadel barracks. He was mentioned in dispatches and given medal with clasp, 4th Class Medjidie and Khedive's Star.

On 22nd July, 1884, he was married by special licence at St. Andrew's Church, Wells Street.

In April, 1885, the Regiment left Dover for Sheffield. He came up in May for the Staff College examination, but broke his compasses and came back very depressed as he was quite sure he had not got through. Therefore the following letter which he received in August from Colonel O'Grady Haly (a brother officer in the Regiment who had a Staff appointment in London), was a great relief.

REGIMENTAL LIFE

"I have this moment learned and hasten to let you know with great pleasure that you have qualified in the obligatory subjects at the Staff College examination."

After a few months in Sheffield they took a small house in Camberley, just opposite the gates of the Staff College. Two very happy years followed.

The Commandant-General, Clive, and his charming wife made all around them happy and contented. Amongst the instructors were Colonel Rothwell, Colonel Maurice and Colonel Richards.

Many were the lifelong friendships made during those happy two years. The Drag in winter and cricket in summer. There was never a match missed in the latter, and just before the first year's examination—which in those days was decisive as, if a man did not pass satisfactorily, he was not allowed to complete the two years—he was offered various mounts and had about four days' hunting before the examination.

The Commandant, meeting his wife, remarked with a twinkle in his eye: "Well at any rate you have sent him fit to the post."

After the two years at Camberley they spent four months at Aldershot.

In August, 1888, he rejoined the 65th at York where they had a very happy time, living in a small house in Heslington Lane. In August, 1889, the Regiment was sent to Cork and he was sent on detachment to Tullamore. In the following January he was told he had been selected for the appointment of D.A.A.G. in Jersey, to date from the 7th May, 1890, for three years.

General C. B. Ewart was there then as Governor. The kindness and consideration that he and

TO NATAL

Mrs. Ewart always showed to him and his, began a lifelong friendship.

The life in Jersey was very pleasant. A nice little house with a charming garden, and a great many agreeable people. The Drag in winter and lots of cricket in the summer made the days pass by very quickly.

On the 31st October, 1892, General, Mrs. and Miss Ewart left and the following day the new Governor-General Markham and Mrs. Markham arrived.

He was indeed fortunate in the two Generals under whom he served in his first Staff appointment. No better comment can be made on the relations which existed between him and his General than the offer made by the General (afterwards Sir Edwin Markham), of the Government Secretaryship of Jersey which was in his gift. Tempting as this offer was to a poor man with four children, it was declined because he felt he was too young to take a billet with so little to do.

Both his late Generals had written to the Military Secretary about him, who held out great hopes of further Staff employment in the near future. Meanwhile the question as to which battalion he would be posted to was a matter of great anxiety.

His beloved 65th were still in Ireland, and the 84th was in Natal. When the news came that he was to go to the 84th he tried all in his power to get an exchange, but as that failed he left on the 4th November, 1893, for Natal.

He went alone, for the four children had to be looked after and the expense of the journey for the whole family was prohibitive.

During his time at Pietermaritzburg he appears to have done a lot of useful work in helping Major

REGIMENTAL LIFE

Watts with some Intelligence work, and maps required by the Intelligence Department in the War Office.

In May, 1894, they heard that the Regiment was to be moved to Wynberg, which pleased him very much.

Before leaving Natal he went to Eschowe in Zululand where the Regiment had a detachment. He was very keen to see Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift. His friend, Captain Shadwell, was up there, so they had an expedition into the northern part of Zululand and saw the battlefield of Ulundi.

He returned to Pietermaritzburg.

After asking for leave, which was refused, he telegraphed to his wife to come out to Cape-town in the *Scot* where he met her on the 20th August.

They first stayed at Coghill's Hotel, Wynberg, and then took a dear little house at Wynberg just below the cricket field belonging to Mr. Rhodes' secretary, a Mr. Milton (afterwards Sir William Milton), who got his K.C.M.G. for services in the South African War.

He had brought two ponies from Natal so they rode nearly every day before breakfast. He played cricket a great deal. General Cameron was still at the Cape and one day when his wife was lunching with him and his daughter at the Castle, General Cameron informed her that he had just had a telegram from England offering her husband an appointment in Mauritius. He was horrified when she told him nothing would induce them to go there and told her she would ruin her husband's career if she made him refuse it.

Life at Wynberg was made very pleasant for

CECIL RHODES

them by the kindness and hospitality of Sir Henry and Lady Loch.

The Governor-General at that time lived at Newlands. He, when he was quite a young man, was at Peking in 1860 and was treacherously taken prisoner by the Chinese with Harry Parkes. He said he owed his life to Parkes for he absolutely refused to be released without his friend. Sir Harry in his letters to his wife at home, states that Henry Loch would not have been taken prisoner at all if he had not tried to warn him of his danger. A fact which seems to reflect equal honour on both men.

Sir Harry Parkes married Captain Plumer's aunt, so that his nephew and his wife always had a very special welcome at Newlands.

General Goodenough succeeded General Cameron in command at the Cape early in 1895.

During the time at Wynberg Captain Plumer met Cecil Rhodes for the first time. He was then at the zenith of his career. He and Doctor Jameson dined at the Castle with the Goodenoughs. No one could help being impressed with the great man. His head was like that of a Roman Emperor.

In April, 1895, he got six months' leave. He and his wife returned to England in the *Arundel Castle*. After spending two months in London they took rooms in a farmhouse at Grosmont on the Yorkshire moors. They were ideally happy with their four children going for expeditions, picnics, etc. They had one fat pony who always accompanied them for the children to ride on in turn. The two little ones had most of the rides as they were not able to manage very long walks.

Before leaving London he had interviews with the Military Secretary who said nice things not

REGIMENTAL LIFE

only about the reports of his two Generals on his Staff work, but also spoke appreciatively about the reports and maps done for the Intelligence Department in Natal. He said he could almost promise him a Staff appointment in England.

Chester seemed just the place to suit them, a home in England for three years.

Then the blow fell, someone else was given the coveted billet. His leave was nearly over and there was no time or chance of effecting an exchange.

He left England on 9th November, 1895, a very sad and disappointed man.

On his arrival at Capetown on 2nd December, Captain Vernon (the General's A.D.C.) came on board and told him the General (Goodenough) wished to see him at once as Major Murray his Military Secretary was ill and was going home on six months' leave, and he wanted him to act as his Military Secretary during his absence. The matter was quickly arranged and after two very busy days inspecting the Regiment he started with the General and Captain Vernon on the 5th December for St. Helena in the Flagship *St. George*.

He writes.

" We arrived at 2 o'clock on Thursday the 11th. The General, Vernon and I, and the Admiral and his Staff, disembarked, found conveyances of sorts and drove up to call on the Governor who lives about 4 miles inland. The road is uphill all the way and we hardly went out of a walk. It took us about an hour and a quarter to get there through barren, rocky, uninteresting country reminding me rather of Aden. On Friday morning we in-

AT CAPE TOWN

spected the Forts near the town. In the afternoon we had a parade and afterwards visited the Hospital, etc.

"On Saturday we were hard at work all day inspecting barracks. We began at 9.30 a.m. and it was nearly 7 p.m. when we finished. On Sunday we went to the Church Parade Service at 9 o'clock and then were busy with reports and things until 12. Then we started to ride to Longwood where Napoleon died. We visited the house. It is interesting but a poor place for the great man to have ended his days in. We rode on to see the tomb, and then across a new (to us) part of the island to Plantation (the Governor's house). It has nice trees all round and altogether civilized. The ride improved our ideas of the island, there is plenty of vegetation, very pretty valleys and one or two magnificent views down to the sea. After dinner the General went over the Defence scheme with me which kept us up until past 11.

"I was up early on Monday morning as we had arranged to have a Field Day, but about a quarter to six they came to tell us the mail steamer was sighted. We knew she would only stay a few hours so we had to knock off the Field Day and devote our morning to finishing up reports, etc. We came on board at 1 and sailed at 2. We did not let the grass grow under our feet at St. Helena and we wanted another day or so to do all we wanted. I think however a week would be as much as anyone would want."

All his letters home during his journey to the Cape and while he was there are full of his intention of leaving the Army. It is obvious what

REGIMENTAL LIFE

replies he received for he writes at the end of December.

“ You must not think that I should be angry with anything you say as regards leaving the service. I still think it would be best to go if I do not get a Staff appointment in 1896. All you say is very true, but I think we must consider that there is a point at which ambition, as we like to call it, becomes selfishness pure and simple. The prospect of a tour in India with the constant partings and separations seems almost unbearable.”

The last day in 1895 he writes :

“ There seem to be wars and rumour of wars all over the world just now. There is every prospect of trouble in the Transvaal. The Johannesburg people have issued a manifesto this morning practically demanding the franchise, and there are all sorts of wild rumours about to the effect that they have stores of rifles and ammunition and Maxim guns at Johannesburg and are ready to make war on their own account. I fancy there will be trouble at any rate.”

On the 5th January, 1896, he writes :

“ You can imagine that during the last two days the whole place has been in a state of ferment about Johannesburg. The wildest rumours have been flying about. Direct telegraphic communication with Johannesburg has been interrupted and all telegrams have been sent via Pretoria, consequently their accuracy is always questionable.

“ There is no doubt that Jameson surrendered to the Boers after a lot of hard fighting.

FRESH ORDERS

“ The Governor (Sir Hercules Robinson) left for Pretoria last night and he will be there to-morrow morning.”

Two days later he writes :

“ We were in the middle of the inspection by the General this morning when a long telegram was handed him from the Governor at Pretoria. The upshot was that he wanted the General to send some officers to Mafeking and Bulawayo to prevent any attempt of avenging the Jameson disaster and to take from the Chartered Company's officers any guns and ammunition they have there. The General is sending Crofton, O'Meara and myself and an escort of 100 men of the Black Watch. Rhodes has resigned and Sir Gordon Sprigg is to be temporarily Prime Minister.

“ The new Ministers are protesting against troops being sent. It will not be very dignified if we have to take action in the Queen's name and have no troops to back us. However, they gained their point and the escort was cancelled.

“ At present the idea is that Colonel Crofton and O'Meara are to go to Bulawayo and I am to remain at Mafeking where there is a large depot.”

At Kimberley fresh orders were sent and he was told that after taking over with the others Doctor Jameson's camp, he was to proceed to Bulawayo.

“ The camp was about 30 miles north of Mafeking. Six of us went, Newton, the Resident Commissioner, Colonel Crofton, O'Meara and myself and two Bechuanaland Border Police. We started at 6.30 a.m. It was a lovely morning with

REGIMENTAL LIFE

a nice breeze and the drive across the veldt was very jolly. It is a perfectly flat country, green now that the rains are on but quite brown in winter. Plenty of grass, a few patches of mealies but very few trees and those small.

"We reached the camp about 11. It is prettily situated and well laid out. The tents were all standing and everything just as they had left them. The officers lived in mud and brick kraals and they had a corrugated iron hut for a mess. They evidently did themselves pretty well. There was one officer and a few men left behind sick. Our mission was to take over the ammunition they had left, which we did. All the stores were left in an appalling state of confusion and no one seemed responsible. The men left seemed utterly disheartened. One sergeant told us the men did not know where they were going till they were paraded, and that if they had a couple of hours to think it over, at least half would not have gone. It was one of the maddest schemes ever started. Everything pointed to a reckless waste and extravagance. The camp was pitched by a contractor at his own price, he had not been paid. Thousands of pounds' worth of equipment, saddlery, ammunition, etc., was bought, (not paid for I think), and issued anyhow. The men themselves have not been paid, some of them for three months.

"The camp was only three miles from the Transvaal border and the Boers, after Jameson's defeat, could have made a raid on it and looted the whole place. They have made no attempt to do so, merely patrolling the border and I must

A HORRIBLE JOURNEY

say they have acted very creditably in this and many other ways."

From Mafeking Colonel Crofton and Captain O'Meara returned to Cape Colony, and Plumer was given the local rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and was given orders to proceed to Bulawayo via Gaberones. He and a man named Wheeler started from Mafeking on Monday the 13th, arriving at Gaberones on Tuesday. After taking over the arms and ammunition belonging to the Chartered Company and handing it over to the Assistant Commissioner they left by the mail coach early on Thursday. His companion went on to Maebruslee, another Station of the Chartered Company, and he to Bulawayo alone.

He writes from Bulawayo :

"The coach journey is the most horrible thing you can imagine. There was an unfortunate woman with a baby, in it. It is a trial if one has to do a railway journey with a baby, but to travel in a coach for six days and five nights with one is beyond description. It was really terrible. You can't sleep and altogether it takes more out of you than anything I have ever experienced before.

"I am being put up by a Mr. Giffard. He is a great friend of Jameson's and went through the Matabele war with one of the Columns. I have done practically all I have to do here, but I expect I may be kept here some time yet.

"What I had to do was to take over all the guns and ammunition belonging to the Chartered Company, and also of course to prevent any armed force starting from here for the Transvaal.

REGIMENTAL LIFE

As regards the latter there is not the slightest danger. Everything is perfectly quiet here. There was tremendous excitement at the time of Jameson's surrender and if his life had been in danger I believe a number of men would have started off from here in defiance of the Imperial Government or anyone else. The devotion to Jameson is something wonderful ; he is simply worshipped by all classes alike. It is the same wherever he has been. He must be a very remarkable man.

" The place (Bulawayo) is wonderful considering it has only been in existence two years. They are building a Club house at a cost of 10,000 (£) ? and a great building which is to be the Post Office and Stock Exchange.

" Everything seems prosperous and there are a better class of men up here than I anticipated. They have started Polo here and I had a game on Wednesday and enjoyed it.

" Everybody here has been very civil and the company's officers have been most courteous. Of course, the taking over of the guns and ammunition is only a formal matter ; but still it might have been rather an unpleasant job.

" I have not seen Selous. He is manager of some firm here, but he lives about 40 miles away. I met Ashburnham the Magistrate last night. He has had orders to go back to Palapye, and leaves to-morrow, Mr. Chamberlain having wired there was no necessity for him to remain any longer so I hope I shall soon get away.

" I am going to visit the place where they had their fight in the Matabele War before they got into Bulawayo.

" OLD BULAWAYO "

" Llewellyn, who was formerly in the Navy and who is Artillery Instructor, and Carden, the Adjutant of the Rhodesian Volunteers, are going with me. We start early and are going to sleep at Rhodes'. (Arthur Rhodes, a younger brother of Cecil Rhodes)."

Another day he writes :

" Yesterday, Llewellyn, Carden and I rode out to a Mission Station at a place called Hope Fountain some ten miles from here, near the place marked on the map ' Old Bulawayo.' The Missionary is a Mr. Carnegie. He had been in the country 14 years so he ought to know something about it ; a worthy man with a worthy wife.

" I dined with the Spreckleys last night (he is Sir John Willoughby's manager), and met there Selous."

He writes two days later :

" Townsend, the Civil Commissioner, gave us a dinner last night. We were 7. Giffard, Griffen the Mining Commissioner, Smith the Magistrate, Napier and Carden of the Rhodesian Horse, the leading lights in fact. We also met Weston Jarvis and a young Mordaunt who had been Captain of the Eton Cricket eleven about 1886."

It was not long before he was to realize the value of his stay in Bulawayo. He not only obtained a knowledge of the country but he gained the friendship of the leading people.

On the 10th February he received a telegram that he could leave as soon as his successor arrived. On the 1st March Captain Nicholson of the 7th

REGIMENTAL LIFE

Hussars arrived. A friendship began there which only ended in 1924 when General Nicholson, M.P. for the Abbey Division of Westminster, died quite suddenly of pneumonia.

He returned to the Cape on the 12th March.

On the 1st April General Goodenough offered him the appointment of Military Secretary. He refused it as he felt as a married man he could not do the work satisfactorily. He had previously told the General that he intended leaving the Service, which he (the General) thought would be a calamity and probably the offer of the appointment of Military Secretary was to prevent him leaving. Just after this conversation took place they were sent for by the Governor.

The Matabele had risen in revolt in Rhodesia and the situation had become very serious and the Government had authorized a force being raised by the Chartered Company for the relief of Bulawayo, under Imperial officers.

He writes :

“ I am appointed Commander of the Force until Sir R. Martin arrives from England. I am to go to Mafeking and enrol men there, collect horses, saddlery, etc., and then I hope to go on to Bulawayo.

“ As 2nd in command to Martin, Watts is to come from Natal, Kershaw from here and I believe Beresford, 7th Hussars, is to be Adjutant.”

CHAPTER II

MATABELE WAR, 1896

THIS rising gave Plumer his first real opportunity of distinguishing himself as a commander on active service, and it is plain that it also laid the foundation of his great popularity in after-years. Already, as a Major, temporary Lieut.-Colonel, his loyalty to officers on his own staff or under his command was a strong characteristic, and one which naturally produced a corresponding loyalty and affection in his subordinates.

Events in South Africa really began for Plumer when he was sent on a special mission to Bulawayo immediately after the Jameson Raid in January 1896. It was rumoured (falsely) that a thousand armed Rhodesian volunteers were in readiness to march into the Transvaal to rescue the "Doctor," and Major Plumer (as he then ranked) was sent to warn them in the Queen's name against any such attempt, and to take over the arms and ammunition of the British South Africa Company.

During his short stay in Bulawayo a new corps of Native Police was being raised to supplement the white Matabeleland Mounted Police, many of the latter being absent from the country as a result of having accompanied Jameson on his raid. Weston Jarvis, who was in Bulawayo at the time

MATABELE WAR, 1896

on business for one of the companies which were developing Rhodesia, remembers riding back after a Volunteer Field Day (held to impress the natives) and hearing Plumer remark on these new Native Police and saying, "What a fine body of men, and how useful they would be in the event of any rising." Little did he realize that they would be shooting at him in a few weeks' time when the rising came!

The Matabele had never really been conquered in the occupation of 1893, although Bulawayo, their chief town, had been taken, and Lobengula, their king, had been driven from the country. Since that time the natives had been irritated by the indemnity they were made to pay, in the form of cattle, and when, finally, a terrible outbreak of rinderpest came in the spring of 1896, they were led to believe by their "M'limos" or witch-doctors that the slaughtering of cattle under government orders was not a preventive measure, but a fresh form of tyranny. Consequently when the rising came, with upwards of 200 whites murdered, the settlers were caught at an extremely awkward moment; many teams of oxen, for instance, down the long road to Mafeking and indeed all over Rhodesia, having died leaving their loads stranded in every part of the country.

In these circumstances the Administrator, having so few men at his disposal and those hardly able to do more than defend their families, wired south for a relief force of 500 men to be raised and sent to Bulawayo. Fortunately Lieut.-Colonel Plumer, who from his previous visit knew both the country and the men he would be working with, was given command of the "Matabeleland

AN IRREGULAR CORPS

Relief Force," which finally became 750 strong with 1,100 odd horses and mules and was raised almost entirely in Kimberley and Mafeking.

Lieut.-Colonel Plumer himself in *An Irregular Corps in Matabeleland* wrote a detailed account of this force, its organization and its campaigning, and a recital of the many small scraps that it had with the rebels would be tedious in these pages. But it is plain from his own modest story that he took the utmost pains to mould his raw volunteers into an efficient fighting and marching force. For instance, he decided at once that he would get much quicker training both for the rank and file and for his junior officers, if, instead of marching the 300 miles from Mafeking, where he concentrated, to Bulawayo in single column, he split the corps up into detachments of fifty, each under an officer. The daily routine duties in a small party were naturally less irksome to men who were straight from civil occupations, than they would have been in a long column. The officers, also, had a much better chance of becoming acquainted with their men, and the N.C.O.'s were also given more scope as leaders under such circumstances. Added to which the water supply along the route to Bulawayo was a doubtful quantity, and failure at any halting-place was less likely with only small parties bivouacking in any one place each night.

It is not surprising to read, therefore, that this irregular corps in the eight months of its existence, did extremely good work. Two sharp engagements at Khami, only 12 miles from Bulawayo, which showed that the men were steady under fire, were followed by a march up the Gwai River and later by a round-up of strong

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rebel forces at Thabas-i-Mamba on 5th July, when over 3,000 head of cattle and sheep were captured, and the Force found it necessary to arrange for the disposition of 600 women and children who fell into their hands.

Operations after this were confined to dealing with the rebel chiefs who had retreated to the Matoppos Hills, not far from Bulawayo. Quite severe casualties were suffered by the force in the various actions which then took place. And it is interesting to remember that it was due to the efforts of Lieut.-Colonel R. S. Baden-Powell—known now affectionately as “B.P.” to boys the world over—that information was available for Plumer as to the whereabouts of the various rebel chiefs with their impi. Lieut.-Colonel Baden-Powell was a master in the art of reconnaissance.

During this part of the campaign Cecil Rhodes was with the force, and when the rebels were beginning to tire of fighting it was he who really settled matters, by bravely going into the hills with only three others, to meet the rebel chiefs. At the resulting “indaba” which lasted four hours, matters were satisfactorily settled, though the natives made difficulties over the surrendering of their arms. Rhodes lived quite unprotected in his little camp close to the Matoppos for weeks on end, talking daily with the rebels and really taking charge of the situation.

The M.R.F., as they were called, occupied themselves during this period by establishing various forts in Matabeleland, each with stores and garrisons of about fifty men; also in collecting surrendered rifles from the natives, who by October were only too glad to get on with

PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS

the sowing of their crops. And when regular units arrived in the country and the forts were handed over to the new police, which had been raised in Cape Town and elsewhere, the M.R.F., or what remained of it after various local discharges and transfers to police had taken place, marched back to Mafeking after receiving the grateful thanks of the local general, administrator and public bodies ; as well as a generous appreciation from its own commander, which I quote in full below to show what a happy and proud spirit he had evidently infused into those volunteers who, together with him had not slept under a roof for a full six months.

“ Before the disbandment of the corps the Commanding Officer wishes to place on record his appreciation of the loyal support he has received throughout from all ranks. He is fully sensible that without such co-operation and assistance the work which the force has accomplished would not have been possible. He and the other Imperial officers who have served with the corps are proud to have been associated with it, and it is hoped that all will carry away with them pleasant recollections of their services with the Matabeleland Relief Force in 1896.”

The following summary gives an account of the doings of the Matabeleland Relief Force, which he raised, trained and administered with success.

The result of the work of the column is best expressed by the following telegram received by Mr. Chamberlain at the Colonial Office from Lieut.-General Goodenough (acting High Commissioner) :

“ 10th of July. Carrington reports that suc-

MATABELE WAR, 1896

cess on the 5th of July was complete. Patrol reports Thabas Imamba and country for miles round all clear of Matabele."

On the 22nd August he writes :

"The rebels really have surrendered. Moncrieffe brought me the enclosed from Rhodes. I send it to you as it is rather an interesting document. It runs as follows :

'MY DEAR PLUMER,

'We had a regular go with the natives to-day, the indaba lasted four hours, they will not fight again unless forced to. I am sorry Moncrieffe was not present but Colenbrander had a message they only wanted myself and himself. We went through every grievance. There were forty present and all the principal Chiefs.

'C. J. RHODES.

'Moncrieffe will tell you all about it. Armstrong and John Vandermeier accompany him. Please let them deal with natives, the whole question is a personal matter and Colenbrander must have his agents.'

"It is not often the great man condescends to put pen or pencil to paper. He said to me the other day, 'I never write a letter and I wish I had never sent a telegram, all my mistakes have been by telegram.'"

Letters and telegrams of congratulation began to pour in. The same evening Plumer was told the officers of the Corps wished to see him. They presented him with the following little address :

“ GOOD-BYE ! ”

“ SIR,

We, the undersigned, as a token of our esteem and in acknowledgement of the kindness and tact you have invariably shown us, beg of you now that the Corps under your Command is about to be disbanded, to accept a pair of Field Glasses which have been ordered for you. The glasses will be forwarded to your address as soon as a certain engraving has been finished, and it is deeply regretted by us that the sudden disbandment of the Force prevents our having the honour and pleasure of making this request in a much more suitable manner.

“ It has been a great pleasure to us to have had the honour to be with you in the Field, and in saying ‘ Good-bye ! ’ we all unite in wishing you a brilliant future in the Service and throughout your life.

“ We have the honour to be,

“ Sir,

“ Your most obedient Servants.
(Fifty-six names follow.) ”

The General, with Sir R. Martin, came out for a farewell parade. He spoke very nicely to the men and they were much pleased.

The members of the Municipal Council of Mafeking presented him the the following address (which has a certain interest when one remembers the events that followed there years later) :

“ SIR,

“ On behalf of the inhabitants of Mafeking we beg to offer you a hearty welcome on your safe return to the Colony and to convey to you our

MATABELE WAR, 1896

congratulations on the many successes gained by the Force under your command in the recent very arduous campaign in Matabeleland.

“In welcoming you back we can only say that we have watched with great interest your achievements in the north and we wish you every success in your future career in your Regiment or wherever duty may call you.”

Lord Grey the Administrator of Matabeleland, sent him the following letter :

“DEAR COLONEL PLUMER,

“I cannot allow you to break up your Camp on the eve of your return to Mafeking without conveying to you some expression of the gratitude felt towards you by the inhabitants of Bulawayo for the distinguished services you have rendered to the Government and to the people of Rhodesia. The rapidity with which your column was recruited, horses equipped and marched to Bulawayo was in itself an achievement of which you and every member of your force have abundant reason to be proud. The many conspicuous services your Force has rendered in the Field, notably the two brilliant engagements on the Khami on the 24th May, only forty-one days after the date of the first detachment leaving Mafeking. Your night march on Thabas-i-Mamba, and the capture of that important rebel stronghold, and your several engagements in the Matopos, will be long remembered by the people of Bulawayo. I wish on behalf of the Administration and of the English settlers in Matabeleland to acknowledge with grateful thanks the

LORD GREY'S THANKS

part played by all your officers, N.C.O.'s and men who have so gallantly and ably assisted you ; and I would venture to hope that many of them may like the country in which they have been campaigning for the last six months and its people well enough to induce them to return at an early date with the object of establishing for themselves a permanent home among us in Rhodesia.

" Believe me, my dear Colonel, with all good wishes for your future success,

" Always yours truly,

" GREY."

The Sanitary Board and other public bodies also sent a public address to the Officer Commanding, Officers, N.C.O.s and men of the Matabeleland Relief Force, which ends up :

" We trust you will have a rapid and favourable march on your return to the railway terminus and that though we may hereafter see some of you individually settled in this country, there will never again be need for such services as you have lately rendered in so thorough a manner when combined as a Matabeleland Relief Force."

One letter which touched him very much came from the Jesuit Father who had been with the Force during all their engagements. He writes :

" It is almost useless to tell you that I join heartily in all the congratulations you receive and will receive. Men more authorized to do so than I am praise your work ; still nobody

MATABELE WAR, 1896

perhaps knows better than I how much you deserve the love your men have for you.

“ Believe me, my dear Colonel,

“ With kind regards,

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ M. BARTHELEMY.”

Before leaving Mafeking he started a Memorial Fund in the Corps. The subscriptions were to be devoted solely to the erection of tombstones over the graves of those who were killed, or who died during the campaign. Cecil Rhodes started the big fund with £5,000.

He reached Cape Town on the 18th November.

He left Cape Town in the S.S. *Norman* on the 2nd December and arrived at Southampton on the 18th.

A very happy time followed. Christmas with his wife and children. Congratulations from very many friends and relations. He also received a message from the Adjutant-General (Sir Redvers Buller) saying he wished to see him. He was then asked what appointment he wanted. He promptly said Aldershot. So in March he was made D.A.A.G. at Aldershot and made a brevet Lieut.-Colonel.

During January and February they remained in London and he spent most of his time in writing an account of his Corps which was published by Kegan Paul Trench, Trubner & Co., under the title of *An Irregular Corps in Matabeleland*. The book was well received.

As there was no house attached to the appointment at Aldershot they lived in a small house in Alexandra Road. After about nine months, when Colonel Miles's (afterwards General

THE QUEEN'S REVIEW

Sir Herbert Miles) appointment ended, Colonel Douglas was promoted to A.A.G. and Plumer took Colonel Douglas's appointment. Colonel Douglas, however, did not wish to leave his house and move into the old Hut. The Duke of Connaught with his never-failing kindness and consideration suggested that it would be much more convenient if he did not insist on having the D.A.A.G.'s House but took the Hut where the Miles's lived, and added, "I will tell the C.R.E. that it must be done up thoroughly for you." The Hut was not bad and the garden was really attractive.

The life was full of interest with few incidents of importance.

The Field State of the Review held by Her Majesty the Queen on the 1st July, 1897, may be of interest. The names of the Staff were as follows :

General H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, K.G., K.C.B., Commanding.

Captain Blunt, R.A., A.D.C. ; Captain McNeill, 4th Dragoon Guards, A.D.C. ; Captain the Hon. H. Yarde Buller, Rifle Brigade, A.D.C.

Colonel Talbot-Coke, D.A.G. ; Colonel H. S. G. Miles, A.A.G. ; Bt. Colonel the Hon. F. W. Stopford, D.A.A.G. ; Bt. Lieut.-Colonel Plumer, D.A.A.G. ; Lieut.-Colonel Douglas, D.A.A.G. ; Major Churchill, 12th Lancers, D.A.A.G. ; Major-General J. Alleyne, K.C.B., C.R.A. ; Lieut.-Colonel J. B. Nugent, Army Service Corps, D.A.A.G. ; Major Jeffreys, Brigade Major, R.A. ; Colonel Sir Arthur Mackworth, Bart., C.B., C.R.E.

The Review was held in perfect weather and was a fitting conclusion to the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

MATABELE WAR, 1896

Her Majesty came down again to Aldershot on the 7th July, 1898.

The Duke was still in Command.

A.D.C.'s—Captain Blunt, R.A. ; Captain McNeill, 4th Dragoon Guards ; Lieutenant the Hon. W. P. Hore-Ruthven, Scots Guards ; Colonel Wynne, C.B., D.A.G. ; Colonel Douglas, A.D.C., A.A.G. ; Lieut.-Colonel Plumer, D.A.A.G. ; Lieut.-Colonel Alderson, D.A.A.G. ; Major the Hon. J. H. G. Byng, D.A.A.G. ; Major Ellison, D.A.A.G. Major-General Marshall, C.R.A. ; Colonel Sir Arthur Mackworth, Bart., C.B., C.R.E. ; Lieut.-Colonel Parkin, D.A.A.G.

Little incidents of no importance but which are never forgotten, can be recalled. T.R.H.'s the Duke and Duchess gave a garden party every summer to which the whole neighbourhood and Garrison were invited.

The last year of the Duke's Command, 1898, the A.D.C. wrote round to the wives of those members of his Staff who had children and said T.R.H.'s wished them to bring their children. A conjurer was provided for their amusement and they had tea in the dining-room where the two young Princesses and Prince Arthur looked after them.

The Duke, before he left, paid visits of farewell to all his Staff. Quite alone without an A.D.C. he arrived about 5.30 o'clock at the Hut to say good-bye.

On Saturday, 8th October, the Duke was photographed with his staff, and the Special District Order was issued:

" In relinquishing command of the Aldershot District I desire to thank General Staff, Com-



... Aldershot on the 1st July, 1896.

The Duke of Devonshire, K.G., Captain Mc-Nair, M.P., Lieutenant the Hon. ... Douglas, A.D.C., ... the Hon. ... Major Gibson, D.A.A.C. ... Colonel ... C.R.E.; Lieut. Colonel Parker ...

Little is needed to show importance but it is never forgotten can be recalled. the Duke and Duchess gave a garden summer to welcome the whole neighbourhood and Garrison was present.

The last of the Duke ... the A.D.C. ... those members of ... said T.R.H.'s wife ... A company ... and they had ... the two young Princesses ... after them.

The Duke, before he left, paid visits to all his Staff. ... alone with ... he arrived about 1.30 o'clock at ... say good-bye.

On Saturday 5th October the Duke was photographed with his staff and the Special District Order was issued.

"In relinquishing command of the Aldershot District I desire to thank General Staff Com-



FOR THE CAPE

manding Officers, Regimental and Departmental Officers, for the unfailing support they have at all times given to me.

“Owing to the cheerful manner in which all ranks have responded to any call made upon them, the example set by warrant officers and non-commissioned officers and the good behaviour of the men, my duties for the past five years have been rendered pleasant and easy.

“It is with the greatest regret that I now bid farewell to those with whom I am so proud to have been associated.

“ARTHUR,
“General.”

He was succeeded in the Command by General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., G.C.B., K.C.M.G.

On the 26th June Her Majesty held her last review at Aldershot, 1899.

The rumours from the Transvaal daily became more serious. When Colonel Plumer and his wife were at Lord's for the University Cricket Match, Colonel Stanley (A.S.C.) said to the latter, “I have my orders to start for the Cape on Saturday. Your husband will be the next.” He was right for the telegram was awaiting them on their return to Aldershot.

CHAPTER III

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902 THE FIRST ARMY COUNCIL, 1904

PLUMER, Brevet Lieut.-Colonel as he then was, had only two years of peace-time soldiering in England before he returned to the scene of his South African successes. In the summer of 1899 the situation there was extremely serious and it was decided to send out a number of specially selected officers to raise quietly two irregular Mounted Infantry units on the Rhodesian and Bechuanaland frontiers near the Transvaal. Plumer was given command of the Rhodesian Regiment to be formed at Bulawayo.

Those ¹ who, not knowing him, embarked in the R.M.S. *Norman* for the Cape on 15th July and expected to see a tall and swaggering or at least a distinguished-looking and out-standing type of soldier, were disappointed; for he was a rather small, delicate and retiring person, short-sighted and apparently more interested in novels

¹ Names of the officers who went with him: Captain Blackburn, Scottish Rifles; Captain FitzClarence, Royal Fusiliers; Major Godley, Dublin Fusiliers; Lieut.-Colonel Hore, 2nd Staffordshire; Captain MacLaren, 13th Hussars; Captain Marble, West Kent Regiment; Major Pilson, Dublin Fusiliers; Captain Rolt, York and Lancaster Regiment; Lieutenant W. D. Smith, Veterinary Department.

IN RHODESIA

than in his companions, and taking little part in the ordinary trivial round of boardship life. On arrival at Bulawayo, however, his junior officers were at once aware of what the rough Rhodesian settlers evidently thought of him, for the station platform was crowded, and he was greeted with cheers and with cries of "good old Plumer," "remember the Matopos," and so forth.

From that moment all doubts were set at rest and the business of raising the Rhodesian Regiment began in earnest. In spite of many difficulties attendant on such a process, the excellent understanding between Plumer and the officials of the Chartered Company enabled the regiment to march out on the Tuli Road towards the Transvaal fully equipped, quite reasonably trained and 450 strong, by 3rd October.

Colonel Baden-Powell, in command in Rhodesia, was very pleased with them and left for Mafeking to inspect the Protectorate Regiment. War being declared on 4th October he was caught in Mafeking for the siege and Plumer took over command of all forces in Rhodesia.

The first two or three months for the Rhodesian Regiment consisted in taking up a line along the Transvaal frontier of Rhodesia, that is to say the Limpopo River, and in patrolling it constantly. The Boers were in superior numbers and casualties were suffered. But this period undoubtedly laid the foundations of that hard fitness which was to be the chief asset of the regiment round Mafeking in a few months' time. On one occasion the whole force, which included the British South African Police from Rhodesia and other volunteers, made a strong reconnaissance into the Transvaal and

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902

covered the remarkable distance of 54 miles in eighteen hours in extreme heat and with no water.

At the end of December Plumer decided to move west (170 miles) to the Bulawayo-Mafeking railway with a view to working south down that line towards Mafeking which was being strongly besieged.

It may be said that he was faced with a particularly difficult situation at Bulawayo as not only did it devolve on him to keep the railway line south to Mafeking open but also he had to protect the Transvaal border and for this reason had to make a demonstration down to Tuli which was of great importance.

His subsequent operations along the railway line with the armoured trains under Hoel Llewellyn (now Chief Constable of Wilts) were most carefully, methodically and successfully prosecuted, till they culminated in the brilliant reconnaissance in force to Ramathlabama with the object of satisfying himself if it was then possible for him unaided, to relieve Mafeking.

General Sir Alexander Godley, who was in Mafeking, tells me that Plumer's Force outside afforded a great deal of moral support, as well as material in the shape of cattle which he drove into Mafeking.

Gaberones, 80 miles north of Mafeking, was reached with the help of an armoured train. Later Lobatsi, which was heavily shelled by the Boers, and finally Sefetele became the base of operations. The latter place was in the Kalahari desert, none too healthy, and depended for its supplies on the long line from the port Beira in Portuguese East Africa via Bulawayo—a matter of 1,100 miles finishing up with ox-wagons across the desert.

RELIEF OF MAFEKING

Several feints were made towards Mafeking and one resulted in a stiff fight only 4 miles from that place, with rather severe casualties. Plumer himself was hit in the muscles of his arm but, it did not incapacitate him and his medical officer, on appearing to dress his wound daily, was told as often as not, "Go away, I haven't time for you at present." One particularly long reconnaissance during this period at Sefetele Camp was made due east with the idea of destroying Boer ammunition at Zeerust in the Transvaal. Though it failed to achieve its object it is remarkable for the fact that a distance of 70 miles was covered by the regiment in twenty-six hours without a single animal dropping out although it was during the horse-sickness season. An outstanding achievement of animals in war.

At 4 a.m. on 17th May came the relief of Mafeking by the combined columns under Colonels Mahon and Plumer, which met at a rendezvous Jan Massibi, some 30 miles from Sefetele two days before. The action was a stiff one and the brunt borne chiefly by Plumer's force, but is not so interesting in itself as is the story of the famous message sent by Colonel Mahon by native runner to Plumer (who had been sending runners south regularly in the hope of gaining touch and joining Mahon, being too weak to relieve Mafeking by himself). An exact tracing of the message is reproduced on following pages, and shows the leaves torn from Colonel Mahon's notebook, and the ingenious rough code he used to keep matters secret should the Boers capture the runner. The O.C. of the 9th Lancers' name was Little. The strength of his column equalled the Naval and Military Club's number 94 (Piccadilly) \times 10, i.e. about

Plumers Force
Sybrand's Kraal Transvaal

26.9.00

My dear Father

I enclose a tracing of what
is now an historical despatch, i.e.
the one sent by Mahon to Plumer
announcing the proximity of the
Southern relief column -

If the Boers had captured the runner
I don't think they would have
gained much information from
Mahon's note re supplies, numbers
and guns -

I'm afraid this letter won't catch this
week's mail but I wrote yesterday

observe that
Mahon spells
"Military" into
two ls. !

Your affec. Son.

R W Hare.

Below are exact tracings of the despatch sent by Colonel Mahon in command of the Southern Mafeking relief column to meet Colonel Plumer, in command of the Northern relief column.

Despatched by native runner 11-5-1900 and received by Lt Colonel Plumer at his camp at Sefetile 13-5-1900.

The two columns joined hands at Jan Nassibie on the Molapo River about 18 miles West of Mafeking in the morning of the 15th and both columns entered Mafeking about 4 a.m. on the 17th.

The solution of No 2 message is as follows -

"For amount of our supplies read 0-0-1x dancers" - i.e. Lt Col. Little

"Nos = Naval and Miller x 10" - i.e. 94 (Possibly) x 10 = 940

Guess Same Number as boys in Ward family" - i.e. 6 (The defeated enemy)

11-5-1900
We should
be in neighborly
about 14⁵
Look out for
us if you see
two sets
they will be
our
Bhichon Col
To Lt Col Plumer

For amount of our
supplies read
0-0-1x dancers
11-5-00 p.m.
Nos = Naval & Miller x 10
Guess same number as
boys in Ward family

CPH Han
Capt.
Plumer's Force

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902

940, while for the guns the number of boys in the Ward family. "Well," said Plumer on receiving this message, "I don't know how many sons Georgina Lady Dudley has, but I presume it is a battery of six guns," which it was, being "M" Battery R.F.A.

The Queen's birthday was honoured on 24th May by a parade and march past of the troops, and on 26th May, communication between Bulawayo and Mafeking having been restored, the general advance on Pretoria was begun. Three columns, the centre one under General Baden-Powell (who was promoted on the relief), advanced from Mafeking with General Hunter's on the right and Colonel Plumer's on the left or north flank.

Plumer's brigade at this time consisted of his own Rhodesia Regiment, British South African Police, New South Wales Bushmen (one squadron), Mountain Battery B.S.A.P., Protectorate Regiment and Royal Canadian Field Artillery (one battery). The operations in the Transvaal are complicated to follow and more suited to the pages of an official history, consisting as they did of many small actions, very much trekking to and fro over the wide veldt, particularly in the chase after that most elusive enemy De Wet, and finishing finally with the resort to the block-house system whereby the captured ground was at least kept intact and the Boers at last compelled to admit defeat.

General Godley tells me that after Mafeking his march through the Western Transvaal with his Rhodesians and Canadian Artillery was uneventful but from Rustenburg his activities were considerable and his command of a big column of lightly equipped mounted men which was sent

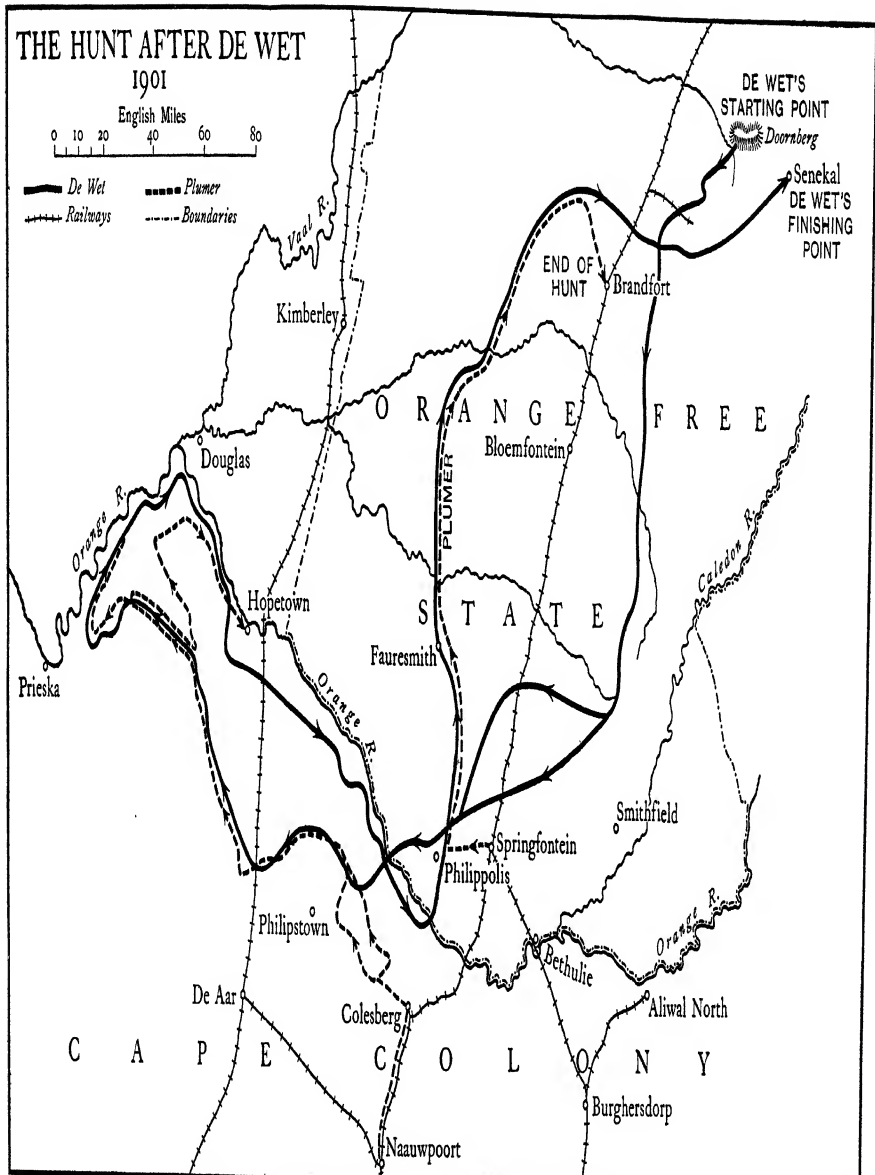
THE HUNT AFTER DE WET

1901

English Miles

0 10 20 40 60 80

— De Wet
 - - - Plumer
 + + + Railways
 - - - Boundaries



THE HUNT AFTER DE WET

to the relief of Colonel Hore at Elandi River might easily have added another page to the record of his achievements had it not been recalled by orders from Pretoria.

The great hunt after De Wet from 26th January, 1901, to 11th March furnishes a wonderful example of the way in which that commander with his super mobile force and with his own knowledge of the country was able to elude his pursuers. In forty-three days he covered some 800 miles.

Lord Kitchener, who had information of his intended raid into Cape Colony, was determined to catch him. He ordered two groups of columns under Generals Bruce Hamilton and Charles Knox to move on the Doornberg where De Wet was assembling his forces. By the time the above columns effected a junction De Wet had moved off to the south. Kitchener then made use of the railway and transferred columns to Bloemfontein and later to the neighbourhood of Naauwpoort, always with the object of heading off De Wet. By 9th February we find De Wet moving on Philipstown, having eluded all the British columns. It was at this time that Plumer came into the picture and, as will be seen, hung on to De Wet like a terrier.

His force, consisting of Australians and New Zealanders, gained contact with De Wet on 12th February near Hamelfontein. The effect was immediate. De Wet abandoned his march to Philipstown and swerved away to the north-west. Plumer hung on to him, through a terrific storm and torrential rain, and eventually captured De Wet's convoy with forty wagons and much ammunition.

After this Kitchener issued a new plan of cam-

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902

paign. He set no less than fifteen columns in motion against De Wet. On 17th February Plumer surprised De Wet's rearguard, scattering it in confusion and hunting it north to Geluks Poort. In so doing Plumer, after untiring efforts for nine successive days, marched himself to a standstill. With no oats for his horses and no biscuits for his men he found himself forced to fall back for supplies. Even now, however, he made a last effort with a handful of his men to retain touch with De Wet and this effort, as we shall see later, had most important results.

De Wet found the Brak in flood. His situation was serious and in emergencies De Wet never hesitated. He abandoned his whole scheme of invasion and doubled to the north-east and searched for a passage across the Orange back to his own country. Plumer still hung on and on 23rd February captured some of De Wet's guns and was within 3 miles of De Wet. All seemed promising as a column under Major Paris blocked De Wet's way, but fortune favours the brave and De Wet led his band of stalwarts, unobserved and unresisted, through the British lines under cover of darkness. Columns under Hertzog, Brand and Fourie were also on the move at this time, and the Orange River was in flood. General Lyttelton evolved a plan by which he was to launch no less than fourteen British columns with the intention of encircling the Boer forces. The river, being unfordable, was certainly in his favour and he also had the railway by which to move his troops. The hunt continued hot and strong. De Wet was in an awkward situation. He followed the river but found drift after drift impassable. He, however, eluded his pursuers and

A WONDERFUL FEAT

early on 27th February De Wet, Hertzog, Brand and Fourie all met close to Sand Drift, a very remarkable feat. Further attempts were made by the various columns to head off De Wet, but owing to the delay in the traffic arrangements or to want of better communication these moves were just too late. De Wet went on hugging the bank of the Orange till dawn on 28th February when he reached Botha's Drift and slipped across in no time. It was the fifteenth ford which he had tried in nine days.

Plumer made one gallant and final attempt to catch De Wet. He and his indomitable Colonials hung on till 11th March when the hunt ended.

De Wet had forded the Modder and reached Senekal. It was a wonderful feat. For forty-three days, during which he covered some 800 miles, he had eluded all the British columns which were in hot pursuit. Surprised by the sudden rise of the Brak and imprisoned between two unfordable rivers with eight columns at his heels, he doubled with all the instinct of a hunted fox, passed round the first line of pursuing columns and through the second under cover of night. He effected his junction with Hertzog, whose skill and agility had been no less remarkable, in the very midst of a district surrounded on three sides by railways and troops and on the fourth by a swollen river, and as these columns closed on him and all hope of escape appeared lost, he braved the dangerous currents of a broad river, leaving his discomfited enemy agape on the southern bank, and after throwing off Bethune and Plumer's final efforts he regained the district from which he had started. All credit is due to our columns. They worked incessantly and no praise is too high

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902

for the efforts and endurance of the units concerned. There is no doubt that they improved from day to day, but it must always be remembered that they were up against an enemy who were past masters in that form of warfare. Plumer certainly showed the greatest doggedness and determination throughout and held on to the very last.

I feel that mention must be made of General Plumer's capture of Pietersburg in the spring of 1901. Suffice it to say that Pietersburg was not only a very important railway centre but was also a base of supplies for several of the Boer forces.

In Kitchener's plan for March, 1901, the first step was to cut deep into the rear and occupy Pietersburg, thus breaking up the Boer base in the north and converting it into a British base for operations to the south.

For the preliminary dash upon Pietersburg Kitchener selected Plumer. No better choice could have been made. The enterprise required nerve and energy, qualities in which Plumer excelled and of which he had given conspicuous proof in the great De Wet hunt. His column, it will be remembered, was a mounted one and was made up almost entirely of Australasians, divided into two corps, under Colonels Jeffreys and Craddock.

Plumer started on 26th March and marched north following the railway. Pains had been taken to keep his destination a profound secret, and with a great measure of success. The speed of Plumer's movements paralysed such resistance as Beyers, the Boer commander, could offer. The progress of the march was as follows. Pienaars' River Station, 40 miles from Pretoria, was reached

THOROUGHNESS

on 28th, and on 29th and 30th he pushed on to Warmbaths over heavy sandy roads that would have been almost impassable for wheeled traffic. Thence on 1st April to Nylstroom and later to Naboom Spring and on 5th April he occupied Piet Potgietererust. After encamping at Marabastad on 7th he reached Pietersburg on 8th April. Plumer had reached his goal in a fortnight. His advance is interesting, in that at each stage he made good his communications behind him. I can detect that thoroughness which I so well remember in later years. Space forbids me from following Plumer's doings further in the South African War, but I venture to think that it was his energy and determination as a reliable Column Commander in the above, coupled with the untiring part which he played in the pursuit of De Wet and his record in 1896 in Matabeleland and in the relief of Mafeking, which first established his great military reputation as a leader and commander. It may be said that his military fame was born and established in South Africa.

But this period of the War, although dull perhaps in the military sense, is full of instances which show the sort of leader Plumer was, and what a loyal and understanding friend to all those under him, both the regular Imperial officers and the Colonials from Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Sir Weston Jarvis, one of those who had fought with Plumer in the Matabele War and was again in the country when war broke out, had command of a squadron in the Rhodesia regiment in this campaign and relates how on one occasion he was given two squadrons to collect a lot of forage into camp near the Magaliesberg Hills on the advance

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to Pretoria. Finishing early and sending the loaded wagons back under escort, he thought he would have a look round for anything else that might be about farther into the hills. "Brother" Boer had been closely watching operations and the result was Major Weston Jarvis's squadrons were warmly received and in fact had considerable difficulty in extricating themselves, which, however, they managed to do without anyone being killed. On the way home a large cloud of dust could be seen approaching from camp and on inquiry this proved to be the remainder of the force, with its guns, which had been ordered to proceed at once to save the "scuppered" squadrons with the utmost speed! One man had got away early and galloped all the way back to camp reporting that they were in a tight place.

In his own words Sir Weston Jarvis finishes the story: "Upon nearing camp, I was aware of Plumer sitting on his horse waiting for me. I rode up to him and saluted. He just put up his eyeglass and looked at me. 'Got into a bit of a mess, didn't you?' he said. 'Yes, sir,' was my reply, 'but luckily got out all right.' 'Didn't you realize why I had given you *two* squadrons to do that job? Doesn't that come from exceeding orders?' 'Yes, sir,' I said, 'and I will take care never to do it again.' That was all—no further mention of the incident. It is not to be wondered at that we all loved him!"

An instance of his unfailing sense of humour and capacity for getting on with his Colonials was when during the march into the Transvaal and when he was riding along with the Canadian battery, known as "Plumer's Pets," he overtook one of the Rhodesia Regiments kit-wagons, on which

ANOTHER GOOD TALE

the load had come adrift, being reloaded by a fatigue party. As he passed he shouted to inquire how many kits were in the load, and on being told 150, yelled out: "Too many! Too many by far! Throw half of them away and come on with the rest!" An old ex-Grenadier Guardsman, one "Dolly" Swift, was on the wagon loading, and hearing this he stood up, arms akimbo and said, "Look here, Mr. Colonel Plumer, your bloody kit ain't ont his bloody wagon." Plumer read him like a book. This was not insolence but in soldier parlance meant, "Perhaps mine will be one of the bits left behind." A second's glare through his monocle and then, "I know you, I know you Rhodesians. Do what you like," and he rode on with another good tale for his Staff about the Colonials. But as the writer says, "the dear little soldier knew we would all go through Hell's fire for him if he needed us to do so!"

That he did not always get the worst of these little incidents with his Colonials is proved, however, by the occasion when his best pony was reported missing one morning when he was commanding the Colonial Brigade. His "galloper," Gibb,¹ having searched for the animal both in the Australians' and New Zealanders' lines without success, returned to an unhappy breakfast at which the General² had to be informed of the theft. "My mind," says Gibb, "proved to be no more suspicious than his own, for after finishing off the tin of 'plum and apple,' he announced his intention of visiting the Australians and New

¹ Rev. Harold Gibb, who lost his sight early in the Great War.

² He had been promoted a month or two after Mafeking.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902

Zealanders. His eyeglass did what my naked eye could never do, for in one of the lines (I need not say definitely which) he detected the missing mount. What had once been grey was now a sort of dirty dun—the work of Condyl's Fluid—while tail had been docked, mane trimmed, and much mud plastered over the identity hoof-numbers. Identity was, however, established before a sheepish-looking Colonial trooper, and a reminder from the General as to the traditional fate of horse-thieves in one of our great Colonies made the 'sheep' shift his weight from one leg to the other, but the General quietly inquired, 'had the culprit ever done a day's march on his feet?' 'No.' Then he might try it, and so throughout a hot day we rather enjoyed our friend walking behind the Brigade Commander, to view the fighting from many points of view! Plumer's ponies were treated with the respect due to them after that day!"

The Rhodesia Regiment was disbanded in October, 1901, after fourteen months of real hard campaigning. The marches were often very long, often in great heat, or in torrential rain, while rations were almost continuously short and the water not good. Some of the men joined the new South African Constabulary, which was being raised by General Baden-Powell, but most felt they wanted a rest after their hardships on the open veldt with no shelter of any kind, and returned to their homes in Rhodesia.

Unfortunately the disbandment was a little previous, for the guerilla warfare continued through the winter and it was not till 1st June, 1902 that the War finally ended. Plumer continued in command of the Colonial Brigades for over a year

LOVE AND RESPECT

more, but was given a well-earned three months' leave in March, 1902.

Men who were with him in the Rhodesia Regiment, like Hare, Weston Jarvis and Moore, his veterinary officer, who are alive to-day, all testify that those qualities in their commanding officer which made them love him as a man as well as respect him as their leader, were those which stood him in such good stead when that far greater world struggle of 1914-18 tested all leaders so destructively. Although physically not a strong man he was never off duty in this campaign and often remarked that the less a man knew about his "innards" the quicker his disability would dissolve. He was most abstemious, generally accepting any particularly nasty ration—and there were many such—with a humorous remark, for it was characteristic of him to believe that everyone was doing his best, including the cook! His Headquarters Mess was crude in both food and equipment compared with those of some Column Commanders.

He was always smartly and tidily dressed, wearing a Sam Browne belt even when others were letting themselves go in their appearance; but at the same time he was extremely tolerant with such men. At night, when he rolled himself up in his blankets under an open sky, he even wore gloves to keep his immaculate hands in good order. His powers of concentration were great, but he was able to dismiss difficulties from his mind without much apparent effort, and he used to obtain relaxation by reading a novel after settling down in his blankets at night. Whilst possessing the virtue of punctuality, he was rarely known to fulminate against a late-comer,

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though he might reprove him later on ; and it was this quiet attitude of mind and manner that made such an impression on the irregular elements in his columns.

He usually dictated the next day's orders and his memory and concentration were so good that he rarely had to correct his dictation even when they were complicated, and he had a facility for expressing his intentions in a few words.

His methods of accounting for public money are amusing to contemplate in these days of stringency. In fact there was some consternation at the end of the War when accounting questions were under investigation and he could only produce the counterfoils of his cheque-books ! " On trek " his method was to write a cheque personally for each official payment and keep the counterfoils as a record. That was all. It saved much bother and seemed to work out satisfactorily to all concerned.

Although luck may have been on his side, perhaps, in this war the fact remains that Plumer's Force never met with a " regrettable " incident, such as happened to various other columns in South Africa, and there is no doubt that much of his good fortune was due to his sound military judgment, his system, and last but not least his happy faculty for instilling confidence in the irregular Colonial troops under him.

As an example of this I would quote from an officer who served with him in South Africa and was afterwards his Chief Signal officer in the Second Army. He says :

" Towards the latter part of the South African War when General Plumer was commanding a column of Dominion troops near Pretoria, it

LORD KITCHENER

happened that the first term of service for the Australian Contingent was over and they were preparing to return home, when an order was received that the Column (General Paget's) was to go immediately in relief of General Clements' Column. The Australians protested loudly and signs of incipient mutiny seemed not unlikely. General Paget made a speech which had little effect. After that General Plumer had the men paraded and told them that he had orders to go to a certain place and that the parade would be at 7 a.m. and added that he would be there and so would they. Cheers broke out and no further trouble. He was no doubt much beloved and trusted by the Dominion Troops."

Known affectionately in the Rhodesian Frontier Force as the "little man," this leader of men was to be recognized as a very big man before his soldiering was done with.

After his Colonial Contingents were disbanded, he asked Lord Kitchener for leave.

The following account of his interview with that great soldier is interesting.

On the 16th March he writes from Pretoria :

"I went to see Lord K. yesterday morning. Before I went in Ian Hamilton told me the Chief was rather doubtful about giving me leave. Lord K. was very nice, as he always is, but you need never flatter yourself that he has any consideration for your feelings or wishes ; he simply looks upon you as a pawn in the game and his whole idea is how he is going to make the most use of you. He gravely considered for a very long time, and then said, ' Yes, I think on the whole I shall get better value out of you if I let you go now and get you

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902

back again, but mind you are to be back the day your three months is up and I shall have a column ready for you.'

"Later he said: 'Well, if you see things are going right you may write and ask for an extension of leave, but if they are as they are now you are *not* to ask for it.'"

He left Cape Town on the 24th March, 1901, in the *City of Vienna*.

He arrived at Southampton on the 15th April, exactly two years and nine months after he left England. The account given in the *Standard* of the 16th April gives a fair idea of his welcome:

"Colonel Plumer yesterday afternoon reached Southampton on board the transport *City of Vienna*, from South Africa, on three months' leave. The distinguished soldier, who looked remarkably well after his three years' absence from England, was met on arrival by Mrs. Plumer, and as he left the transport the troops raised three hearty cheers, which were enthusiastically taken up by the crowds on shore. Colonel and Mrs. Plumer travelled home to Farnham by the train reaching there shortly after eight o'clock. The station and its precincts were thronged with people and on the train coming in the crowd cheered loudly. Owing to the wish expressed by Mrs. Plumer, there was no formal reception. On the Colonel entering his carriage, the horses were taken out and he was drawn through the town to his residence amidst great enthusiasm, the streets being lined with people. On reaching his house Colonel Plumer briefly addressed the crowd, thanking them for his magnificent reception which

PEACE

he said fully compensated him for the hardships he had undergone. The welcome was made the more complete by the ringing of the bells of the Parish Church later in the evening."

He was delighted with the funny old house at Farnham with its really charming garden. As his leave was only for three months they planned to enjoy every moment of it. They first went to Tenby where his brother had an appointment in the Coastguards and his mother and sister lived there with him.

On the 12th May he had the honour of being received by the King on his return from South Africa. On the 13th he received his C.B. at the Investiture.

He insisted on going to Epsom, for if peace did not come before, he would have to return to South Africa before Ascot.

However, on the 1st June, when he was walking in Pall Mall with his wife about four o'clock, they saw the announcement that peace had been signed in Pretoria the night before. It was posted up outside Marlborough House. To them it seemed almost too good to be true.

On the 12th May the Order in Council was approved and issued for the Coronation of King Edward and Queen Alexandra on the 26th June. On the 19th June there was a procession from Buckingham Palace to the Mansion House in which he rode as A.D.C.

The following day the whole Empire was thrown into gloom by the news that King Edward had to undergo an immediate operation for appendicitis. All went well and the Coronation was postponed until the 9th August.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899-1902

Lord Kitchener's final Dispatch appeared on the 23rd June. In it was the following paragraph :

“ Brevel Colonel (local Brigadier-General) H. C. O. Plumer, C.B., A.D.C., has invariably displayed military qualifications of a high order. Few officers have rendered better service.”

In one of his letters to his wife he says:

“ You ask me what I should prefer if I had my choice. Well, it is not much use saying what one would like, but castles in the air don't cost much at any rate, do they, darling ? In the first place promotion to Major-General would be everything, no matter what anyone says. If I was promoted, a Brigade at Aldershot would be what I should prefer to anything.”

This was written on the 17th August, 1901. He had his Brigade in September and was promoted Major-General the 1st November, 1902. He rode in the Coronation procession but did not see much of the ceremony. Being in the middle of August, London looked as if it had been asleep and was awakened with a start.

That night he and his wife dined with General Sir Arthur and Lady Paget. All the guests thought they would have great difficulty in reaching Belgrave Square, but there was no crowd whatever.

In September he took over the Brigade at Aldershot and they moved into “ Wellesley House ” as again General and Mrs. Douglas did not wish to move from the Hut which they had made so attractive, and so he had the house belonging to the Divisional General.

A SWORD OF HONOUR

One of the first duties was the presentation of medals. On the 29th October at the Talavera Barracks, he presented medals to the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Reay. Private Scott, V.C., was especially sent for. The General shook hands with him and congratulated him on his bravery.

On the 8th November the 2nd Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Amber, were presented with their medals. On the 19th December he went up to Doncaster to present medals to the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment.

In *The Times* of the 19th February, 1903, there is the following item of news:

“Major-General H. C. O. Plumer, C.B., was presented yesterday afternoon at the offices of the British South Africa Company, St. Swithin's Lane, with a sword of honour, subscribed for by the people of Rhodesia. General Plumer was in uniform and accompanied by Mrs. Plumer. The Duke of Abercorn said they all felt a debt of gratitude to General Plumer for his services during the late war. He was a brave General, who did his duty well and also combined with it the art of diplomacy. General Plumer had to train his men before he could lead them.

“Lord Grey said no General in the field had performed such gallant service under such trying conditions as General Plumer in the late campaign. He had also won for himself the thanks of the people of Rhodesia for the great services rendered in 1896 and the admirable way he had handled a very difficult business, and he had a deep place in the affections of all Rhodesians.

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“ Mr. C. T. Holland, in presenting the sword, said he had been deputed by the people of Matabeleland in particular, and the people of Rhodesia in general, to present this tribute of their esteem.

“ General Plumer expressed his grateful thanks for all that had been said regarding him, and for the sword. He referred in the course of his remarks to the services of the Rhodesians in the war and to the brilliant defence of Mafeking by General Baden-Powell, and related at some length the part played by the Rhodesian contingent in its relief.

“ In response to a call from the Duke of Abercorn three cheers were heartily given to General Plumer.

“ The hilt and scabbard of the sword of honour, which was of beautiful workmanship, are of Rhodesian gold, the former bearing the badge of the York and Lancaster Regiment, the General's old Corps. On the end of the scabbard is an ornamental design bearing the names of the campaigns in which the General has participated.”

During the summer of 1903 there were various functions, the outcome of the war. Medals to the various units, and new colours were given to the East Surrey Regiment by the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts.

The French President, Loubet, came over to England in July and was present at the Review on the 8th July which was held by His Majesty, King Edward.

He received the following letter dated the 6th August, 1903 :

COLCHESTER

" DEAR PLUMER,

" As I understand you are only holding a Brigadier-General's appointment, I propose to appoint you to a district, and would like to know whether you would prefer Dover or Colchester. Please send me a telegram addressed here on receipt of this.

" Yours sincerely,

" ROBERTS.

" I conclude you would prefer a District Command, am I right ? R."

Neither he nor his wife liked Dover, so the telegram was sent accepting Colchester, where they went early in December.

The house, "Scarletts," which the General there occupied was not in any way suitable. It had, however, a good garden which had been well laid out, but was then in a very neglected condition.

They moved in just before Christmas, which they spent as usual with his wife's mother in Devonshire Place. No. 5 had always been a second home. They all went to the early service on Christmas Day, but it was cold and foggy and she caught cold, which developed into pneumonia and she died on the 9th January. He had lost his mother in November, so their stay in Colchester began in great sadness.

On the 13th February he received the following letter from Lord Roberts :

" 12th February, 1904.

47, PORTLAND PLACE, W.

" DEAR PLUMER,

" I felt some compunction in recommending you for a place on the Army Council as I thought

THE FIRST ARMY COUNCIL

it would be inconvenient to make another move so soon after you had settled in Colchester, but it seemed to me desirable you should be known as an Administrator as well as a fighting soldier.

"I trust you will like your work and that I have not incurred Mrs. Plumer's displeasure in getting you ordered to London.

"Believe me,

"Yours sincerely,

"ROBERTS."

On the 14th February the *London Gazette* announced that by letters patent the new Army Council was appointed. To be Quartermaster-General to the Forces (Third Military Member), Major-General H. C. O. Plumer, from Commanding 10th Division and 19th Brigade, 4th Army Corps.

The *Spectator*, giving the biographies and comments on the new Army Council, writes as follows :

"General Plumer is emphatically the 'soldiers' soldier.' One of the half-dozen living Generals whom the whole Army unites in praising. We are convinced that his alert mind and strenuous character will be as valuable at the War Office as on the Veldt."

Very shortly after taking up his new appointment, 24, Ennismore Gardens became their home and they settled down to life in London.

He enjoyed the work but missed the outdoor life and the soldiers he loved so well.

He and his Chief, Mr. Arnold Forster, worked in perfect agreement. The passage from the latter's diary which is quoted in Mrs. Arnold Forster's

MR. ARNOLD FORSTER

memoirs of her husband, makes this abundantly clear. He writes (page 297) :

“ General Plumer has asked for nothing, has received nothing but has deserved much. He has been perfectly loyal, has made no speeches, has discussed the work of the office inside the office alone, has laboured steadily and successfully at the work of his department, and whenever he leaves will be able to look back on a record of work performed of which he may be proud and for which the Army will be grateful.”

I am indebted to Mr. Amery, who was in close touch with Mr. Arnold Forster at the time, for the following general account of the causes which led up to General Plumer's removal from the Army Council :

The new Secretary of State, Mr. Arnold Forster, was a man of high ideals and devoted patriotism who had made a life-long study of national defence and in particular of the problems of the Army, both from the point of view of Imperial strategy and from that of the interests of the private soldier. From both points of view he was convinced that the Cardwell system, which for more than thirty years had governed the recruitment and organization of the Army (and is still in force to-day) was inadequate to meet the military tasks with which we might be confronted, or secure either the numbers or the quality of the recruits required.

The essence of that system was the maintenance at home of a number of linked battalions equal to the number of battalions in India and other overseas garrisons. The soldier was enlisted for twelve years, seven of active service and five in the

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reserve. He received his training in a home battalion, went on to serve in his linked battalion abroad, which was maintained at war strength, and then passed into the reserve. On mobilization the home battalions were filled up with reservists and became available for the purposes of an expeditionary force.

The system, from the purely administrative point of view, worked smoothly and had many advantages. But it was open to certain very serious objections. The army we could mobilize for a major war bore no relation to any strategical problem. It was a mere incidental by-product of our system for furnishing drafts to such units as happened to be required overseas. On the other hand, the system gave us no force available at home for immediate dispatch in a minor war. From the soldier's point of view the service was not long enough for a career, too long to give him a fair chance in industrial life afterwards.

Mr. Arnold Forster proposed to overcome these objections by giving the soldier the alternative of a really short service (fifteen months in the infantry), or a much longer one with facilities for extension. The longer service would have enabled the units overseas to require fewer drafts. The shorter service would have enabled the accumulation of a much larger reserve and the consequent mobilization of a much larger force for a really great crisis. At the same time the scheme provided for a small long-service force at full fighting strength maintained at home and available for dispatch abroad at a moment's notice. It was a far more flexible scheme than the Cardwell scheme, and better suited to the diversity of our

REMOVAL FROM ARMY COUNCIL

defence problems. In any case it would by 1914 have provided an expeditionary force much more nearly adequate to the emergency that then confronted us.

But the scheme involved not only a far-reaching reorganization, but the assumption, very revolutionary in the eyes of the old school generals, that a soldier could be trained in little more than a year. All the inertia and all the traditions of the old Army and War Office were roused in resistance to it, and Mr. Arnold Forster's impatient earnestness only strengthened the opposition. Of his whole Army Council General Plumer alone was really persuaded of the merits of the Secretary of State's scheme and prepared to co-operate wholeheartedly in making it a success.

Before the scheme could be put into force the Conservative Government fell and Mr. Arnold Forster was succeeded at the end of 1905 by Mr. Haldane. The new Secretary of State decided to let the whole scheme drop. That the Quartermaster-General would have loyally accepted his new chief's decision is undoubted. But misrepresentations as to his attitude were made to Mr. Haldane who, without making any attempt to ascertain the facts, simply intimated to General Plumer that he was not to be included in the new patent as Third Member of the Army Council. The reason given was that as the policy of the Department was to be totally altered the Secretary of State had been given to understand that General Plumer could not be prepared to carry out a policy with which he did not agree.

It was a shattering blow, for it was totally unexpected.

The general opinion in the Army at the time was

THE FIRST ARMY COUNCIL

that General Plumer resigned from the Army Council rather than agree to a policy with which he was not in agreement and the Army gave him full credit for his action. That is not so. It is fair to say that he left the Army Council owing to misrepresentations which were made to the then Secretary of State for War (Mr. Haldane) with regard to his views on certain matters. He was represented as holding views which he did not hold and expressing opinions which he had never expressed. It was purely a case of misrepresentations.

I have before me, as I write, many letters from Mr. Arnold Forster, (and Mrs. Arnold Forster's kind permission to publish) showing not only a very delightful friendship existing between the two families but real sorrow and regret at the removal of General Plumer from the Army Council by Mr. Haldane on succeeding Mr. Arnold Forster as Secretary of State for War.

It is quite clear that Mr. Arnold Forster wished to carry out certain reforms in the Army with which General Plumer was in general agreement as evidenced by a letter of Mr. Arnold Forster to General Plumer on 6th May, 1905, in which he says :

“ While it is a pleasure to me to find that we are in agreement, it is also a great satisfaction to me to receive a document written in such perfectly clear and concise terms as your memorandum.”

And again :

“ It is naturally a source of great satisfaction to me that you are able to give a general support to the policy which I have so long advocated.”

HIS BITTEREST DISAPPOINTMENT

It is also quite evident from these letters that the other Military Members were not in agreement with their Chief.

In a letter of 19th January, 1905, Mr. Arnold Forster writes :

“ I believe in my heart that my military colleagues are wrong in their view that doing nothing is the best policy for the Army. If they would only look ahead, I am confident they would see that changes and great changes must come.”

It is interesting to note that in a letter of 18th January, 1906, Mr. Arnold Forster writes :

“ Nothing has for a moment displaced from my mind the feelings of pain and regret which I have experienced since you left the War Office on account of what I have always felt to be the harsh and unjust manner in which you were treated.

“ You have behaved, may I say it, as I knew you would, with patience and dignity, but to me, I confess the whole proceeding has been irritating and distressing in the highest degree.”

These extracts will, I hope, show the good relationship which existed between the Plumer and Arnold Forster families.

There is a lesson to the younger generation in the above story.

His treatment must have been his bitterest disappointment in life. Remember he was dismissed from being the third Military Member of the Army Council when a Major-General. He never said a word. He bore the blow in silence. He bore no ill will. All the time I was with him I never recollect his mentioning the subject, which

THE FIRST ARMY COUNCIL

is proved by the fact that I never knew the truth till after his death.

He was given a K.C.B. after leaving the Army Council.

No provision of any kind was made for him. He had at that time a boy at Eton and two daughters at school in Paris. With less than a week's notice his pay of two thousand a year (it may have been more, but I am not quite sure) ceased and he was placed on half-pay as a Major-General. As his wife remarked ; " I have to give our servants a month's notice, but my husband had less than a week's."

I do not think any soldier has ever before or since been treated in such a manner, and no one except his wife knew how terribly he felt it.

One thing they both determined on was that they would not run into debt, and by rigid economy they pulled through all right, but it was a lesson that he never forgot, and in after life, when he had to make changes on his Staff, he took good care that proper notice should be given and adequate pay, if possible, assured.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE IN IRELAND. THE 5TH DIVISION

IN February, 1906 he was offered the command of the 5th Division Irish Command, which was vacant in May or June. General Morton whom he was to succeed, died suddenly in April, and he went over to Ireland sooner than he expected.

Lord Grenfell was in Command and he was made very welcome by his new Chief, who with his truly charming wife did all in their power to make life pleasant to him and his wife. The Hut at the Curragh was far from luxurious, but he loved the hunting, and he made it a condition when he accepted the appointment that he might spend two or three months in Dublin in the winter, as he thought the draughty Hut would be too trying for his wife in the cold weather.

Shortly after he arrived in Ireland, the Dublin Brigade became vacant, and General Lawson, who worked with him at the War Office, applied for it. When he was promoted General Monro succeeded him, General Alec Thornycroft had the Curragh Brigade and General Vesey Dawson the one at Belfast.

King Edward and Queen Alexandra came to Dublin in July, 1907, and had a most enthusiastic welcome. They had a good many dinner parties on board the *Victoria and Albert*, and

LIFE IN IRELAND

on the 11th July he and his wife were amongst the guests.

The land seemed not only prosperous, but happy and contented. One year they took a house in Stephen's Green, very quaint with a very fine mantelpiece and panelled staircase. Lord and Lady Aberdeen were at the Castle and entertained a great deal. Lord and Lady Grenfell were in mourning in 1906 and therefore went away for the Dublin season, so he had to represent the Army at all the functions. They both thoroughly enjoyed the racing at Leopards-town, the Curragh, and Dublin; they hardly ever missed a race meeting and he hunted regularly with the Kildare.

They had one unpleasant experience at the Curragh Hut. One night, or rather early morning, they were roused by the alarming news that Major Cubitt's Hut was on fire. As it was the next one to theirs it was especially dangerous, as the Ammunition Store was also quite close. They spent most of the remainder of the night in the garden watching the fire engines which soon got to work. Although they were unable to save the one Hut the fire did not spread, and beyond the fact that the roof of their Hut was deluged with water no harm was done.

Lord Grenfell's farewell letter indicates so well the happy relations that existed between him and those who worked with him that it is given in full.

" BUTLERS COURT,
BEACONSFIELD.

7th April, 1908.

" DEAR PLUMER,

" I am anxious to let you, who have so greatly

LORD GRENFELL'S FAREWELL

assisted me in Ireland, know that two Field-M Marshals are to be made from the *active* list, and that I am to be one.

" Since I commanded in Ireland I have tried to interfere (and to allow interference) with Divisional Generals as little as possible. But I could not have carried this out, had I not been so well and loyally served as I have been by you, and under you, your Brigadiers.

" At the end of a long, and in the early years a somewhat active career, this assistance has been of great advantage to me, and I sincerely thank you not only for the good administration of your Division, but for the cordial relations with my Staff, which you have always maintained.

" Lady Plumer has also been so kind and helpful to my wife in everything connected with Army institutions that we are both most anxious you should express our gratitude and tell her our news, which of course must be kept *secret* until *Gazette*.

" As regards the Parade, I cannot do better than leave it to you. I should like a march past, and then the Division formed up so that I could say a few words of adieu: drill order will give less trouble.

" Yours,

" GRENFELL.

" P.S. Please tell Thornycroft and Monro my news. I owe them both a debt of gratitude."

All soldiers and their families in Ireland sincerely regretted the departure of Lord and Lady Grenfell; their unfailing sympathy and kindness endeared them to all, and it was said of her

THE 5TH DIVISION

when her life ended so tragically, that to know her was to love her, and the more you knew her the more you loved her.

General Sir Neville and Lady Lyttleton arrived in June. They were old friends, so the remainder of the time in Ireland was very pleasant. Sir Herbert Plumer was promoted Lieutenant-General at the end of 1908, and therefore his appointment came to an end in 1909. They returned to London, and during the time he was on half-pay he did a great deal of work for the Boy Scouts. He was Commissioner for London and worked very hard for them.

No military appointment of any kind was offered to him, so when in July, 1911, he received the offer of the Northern Command he wanted to refuse it. He had been offered a civilian appointment. His wife who knew how much he loved the Army did all in her power to make him go to York, and prevailed on him to write to Lord Roberts and ask his advice. The following letter is such a testimony to the foresight and wisdom of the writer that it is of historical value.

“ ENGLEMERE,

ASCOT.

18th August, 1911.

“ DEAR PLUMER,

“ I find it difficult to answer the question you put to me in your letter of yesterday. The Northern Command is not a very exciting one to a practical soldier, but it is socially a pleasant one, and it keeps you on the active list for seven years longer ; if you decided to accept the offer of the Command you would then be not much

LORD ROBERTS'S ADVICE

past sixty-two, and in those seven years no one can foretell what may happen. There is trouble in the air, trouble which seems to me likely to increase rather than lessen, and if war should break out during that time you would bitterly regret having left the Army. I can understand your being disappointed at men younger and junior to you being preferred before you, and the offer of a permanent salary of £500 a year is tempting.

"It is, as I have said, difficult to advise, but I feel that were I in the same quandary I would accept the Command and trust to its leading to something better.

"I shall be at home all this week, if you would like to come and have lunch at 1.30.

"With kind regards to Lady Plumer,

"Believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

"ROBERTS."

The letter had the desired effect and he wrote at once to accept the Command. With one little characteristic action he presented the letter to his wife to post, as he said on her head rested the responsibility.

Directly he had accepted the Command he threw himself whole-heartedly into the necessary preparations, and never by word or thought did he regret his decision.

The Oliphants, whom they knew at Aldershot, kindly asked them to stay. There was no Government House, for Sir Lawrence had refused to go into the old one which was quite impossible and which had been turned into offices. Dring-

THE NORTHERN COMMAND, YORK

thorp, where the Oliphants lived, was anything but ideal for a Government House, but it had a good garden, and after adding another bathroom, they took it on and were very happy and comfortable in it.

The next three years were busy but without any special incident. The summer of 1914 was ideally beautiful and in July, instead of going up to London for the Eton and Harrow, they motored to the Lakes, making Grasmere their headquarters. The quiet and calm always struck them afterwards as a wonderful preparation for the storm and stress of the Great War which was so soon to break on the World.

On 2nd August the Archbishop had a garden party at Bishopthorpe. There was only one thought in everyone's mind. Would there be a war?

The Archbishop, being told by a person whose opinion he valued that it seemed inevitable, immediately said he would preach in the Minster the next day.

It was a wonderful sermon worthy of the occasion which few people who heard it would ever forget.

The next weeks were passed in a fever of preparation. Plumer's Military Secretary, Major Harding Newman, of course gave up his appointment and was in France early in September: his A.D.C., Captain Jones Bateman, rejoined the Norfolk Regiment and gradually most of his Staff were replaced by men on the reserve. He longed to go out, but only once did he show even to his wife what he felt, then he said: "You know, if I am not sent out, I send in my papers directly the War is over."

WAR

If only those in authority had told him then that, on the death of General Grierson, Sir John French had asked for him, to command the Second Corps, what a difference it would have made to him in those months of waiting and hoping to be sent to the front.

The rumours and scares of invasion were never-ending. Everyone was keen to help, the more uncomfortable the job, the more eager they were to do it.

Sir John Grant Lawson wrote out an appeal for money for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association, for as all the reservists were called up, their families had to be looked after and provided for. Most generously did Yorkshire respond to the appeal.

Early in November Lord Kitchener, who firmly believed that there would be an attempt made by the Germans to land in the North, ordered the Headquarters to be moved to Newcastle, a most inconvenient arrangement, for there was no place which could be turned into offices, so it meant the General and his Staff had to stay at an hotel and go backwards and forwards to the Headquarter Offices in York.

On the 16th November the bombardment of Scarborough and Hartlepool took place. He writes :

“ Rather an exciting morning as you can imagine. As luck would have it, I had arranged for Chapman to go into York and he had started before I heard anything, so I was alone in the Hotel with telephones going all round. Chapman heard a rumour at Darlington and came straight back. I have sent him to Scarborough

THE NORTHERN COMMAND

and Petrie to West Hartlepool. Scarborough got off pretty lightly though the Grand Hotel was badly knocked about. Nickalls has been there and returned. There is a lot of damage at Hartlepool, and the number of civilians killed and wounded is pretty heavy—70 killed and 150 wounded. The men (soldiers) behaved very well in both places, and so did the population.”

CHAPTER V

THE FIFTH CORPS

ON Christmas Day came a cipher telegram from Lord Kitchener, saying he was to proceed without delay to Belgium to take up the Command of the 5th Corps.

He left on the 5th January. His Staff—Jeudwine, Petrie, Brown, Fegan, Stirling, Robertson, Knox, Legge—were all at Southampton and his personal Staff consisting of young Heywood and his wife's nephew, Charlie Jackson, were with him.

His one thought when he saw the trenches his men had to occupy was what he could do to better their condition. On 10th January he writes: "The men are having a very bad time. The mud is awful and the state of the trenches indescribable," and a week later he writes: "A nasty cold day, out here one always thinks what it must be for the men in the trenches."

In his Fifth Corps Major-General Snow commanded the 27th Division and Major-General Bulfin the 28th. He writes about some friends who had just lost their sons:

"I am so sorry for them and for all who have lost youngsters who go down every day; it is terrible the number we lose. Colonel Farquhar the C.O. of the Princess Patricia's Canadian

THE FIFTH CORPS

Regiment was killed in the trenches at St. Eloi last night, such a gallant fellow and his Regiment have done extraordinarily well. It is very trying to have all these good men killed. We lose officers every night and there is no way out of it.

" *April 23rd.* I am writing about 9 a.m. after a very trying night. The French on our left gave way altogether yesterday evening and we were all night in a very awkward position: we still are for that matter, but we are better than we were. I am still all right.

" *April 30th.* The position is very uncomfortable and likely to remain so unless the French make a really serious effort.

" Things have not been made better by Sir John French slighting Sir Horace, and taking practically all my force away from him and leaving me independent of him. It is the last thing I wanted. It is not fair because Smith-Dorrien and I were in absolute agreement as to what should be done, and I am only doing now exactly what I should have been doing if I had remained under Smith-Dorrien.

" He, Smith-Dorrien, feels it very much of course; he came to see me yesterday and had a long talk.

" Our casualties have been very heavy and the loss of officers and men is very serious. Three Brigadiers have been killed and a great many senior Regimental officers. Poor little Burt (York and Lancaster) and his Adjutant were both killed, and the Regiment have lost heavily, as indeed have nearly all.

THE SECOND ARMY

"It is a depressing statement, but you know how I feel all these losses. On the other hand, the troops without exception have behaved splendidly: they really have done well, and what is so good, is that several of the Regiments who did not do so well at the start, have done very well. It has been a pretty severe test to the Northumbrian Division, and they have come out of it well, especially the Northumbrian Brigade. Poor Riddell the Brigadier was killed."

On the 6th May, 1915 he was told he was to take over the command of the Second Army. He says in his letter: "I am awfully sorry to leave the Corps and the Staff. We have gone through some pretty rough times together." On the 14th May, after the first gas attack, he writes: "When one thinks of all these poor fellows killed and all the sorrow, one feels what a miserable business it is, but we have to go through with it."

When he took over the Second Army Milne was his Chief of Staff, and he was promoted in July and Bruce Williams came in his place. Rycroft was also promoted and Wintour took his place.

In August he got home on leave for five days, and acknowledged that he felt he wanted it, for he was very tired. However, the air at Westgate did him a lot of good and he returned refreshed to his Headquarters.

Colonel Wintour, his Chief Administrative Officer, was again ill and had to return to England. Colonel Chichester was appointed in his place.

In November Sir John French told him he was going to recommend him for a "G" and asked

THE FIFTH CORPS

which he would prefer, the G.C.B. or G.C.M.G. He chose the latter, which he was given, and also the same month the Legion of Honour and Belgian Order of the Star of Leopold, and his promotion as full General was ante-dated from June.

The second week in December he was told about the change in the Higher Command. On the 22nd December he came on leave for ten days, the longest he had had since the War began.

The health of the troops, which was always one of his chief anxieties, was most satisfactory, and there was a great contrast in numbers between the sick in 1915 and in 1916 over the same period. In 1915, when the Army numbered 140,000 they had 10,000 sick, and in 1916, during the same time, when it numbered 260,000 there were only 4,000.

They had a great deal of snow in March and as he puts it in his letter, "the men are having a very bad time in the trenches." There was a good deal of fighting during March. They got back the Bluff, that spot so well known to the Ypres Salient on the 2nd with comparatively little cost.

They had a worrying time about St. Eloi, first the mine exploded and they took 200 prisoners, then in the counter-attack the Germans re-took some of the craters and it was not until the 3rd April that they got them back with some eighty prisoners and part of the line they wanted. Then on the 6th April the Germans re-attacked and the situation was difficult to understand. On the 10th things had improved and the Canadians were holding on. The end of April there was another gas attack.

THE SECOND ARMY

On the 5th May, 1916 he had the Chaplains to tea (27) and spoke to them afterwards; he wrote that it was rather an ordeal.

At the end of the month General Bruce Williams was given a Brigade and he had to choose a new Chief of Staff. On the 2nd June I was appointed, but as the Canadians with whom I was then serving, were having such severe fighting I did not actually join the Second Army until the 13th June.

The deaths of so many young men that he knew and who were sons of old friends caused him real sorrow. On 21st July he writes :

“ Billy Congreve was killed yesterday. It is dreadful ; he stood out as one of the youngsters who had done best in the whole force. I feel his death very much. I am just sending you this line to let you know. Poor Walter (Congreve).”

CHAPTER VI

MY CHIEF AND HIS METHODS OF COMMAND

IT may be of interest to relate the way in which my very happy association with General Sir Herbert Plumer (as he then was) began. I had never met him before the War and the first occasion on which I had that honour was at Trois Tours near Brielen when he visited Major General Baldock, who was then Commanding the 49th Division, when I was G.S.O.I. The Division was then holding the extreme left of the British Line.

A few days afterwards I was returning from the front line one afternoon when I met an ambulance coming away from Trois Tours and found that Major-General Baldock had been severely wounded in the head at Divisional Headquarters.

He was succeeded by Major-General E. M. Perceval.

Our Headquarters were moved to Hospital Farm near Elverdinghe and it was there that Lord Plumer visited us almost daily.

On one of these visits I was told that General Plumer had selected me for Command of a Brigade in the 14th Division at Hooze to replace Brigadier-General Oliver Nugent, as he then was, who was to get a Division shortly.

I went home on a week's leave and on my arrival at Boulogne I was told to report at General

MOUNT SORREL LOST AND WON

Headquarters, where I learnt that the late Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson had refused my Brigade as he wanted me for Brigadier-General, General Staff of a Corps and I was sent to the Canadian Corps in that capacity on its formation at Bailleul.

I learnt subsequently that I was to have gone to the 12th Corps, destined for Salonika, but owing to Major-General Perceval being in hospital at Hazebrouck with influenza, it was decided to send Brigadier-General Bols to 12th Corps and to keep me for the Canadian Corps. The Canadian Corps was in the Second Army. It moved shortly afterwards up to the Ypres Salient with Headquarters at Abeele. It was commanded, first, by Lieut.-General Alderson and subsequently by General Sir Julian Byng, whom I had never met before.

The Canadians had a lot of hard fighting and were heavily attacked at Mount Sorrel on 3rd June, 1916, and lost Mount Sorrel. This was a severe blow as Sir Douglas Haig was then preparing for the Somme offensive and did not want to spare any troops to come north at the moment. He, however, sent up one 6-in. Howitzer Brigade and on 13th June the Canadians, with the help of that Howitzer Brigade, regained Mount Sorrel.

That was really a magnificent performance and reflected the greatest credit on the Canadian Corps.

It was between 3rd June, and 13th, 1916, that General Byng said to me one day: "You have got to go to the Second Army as Major-General, General Staff."

Knowing his sense of humour I never took it seriously. I had known that Brigadier-General

MY CHIEF AND HIS METHODS OF COMMAND

Bruce Williams was vacating the appointment in order to take up a Command, but I had never given a thought to any idea that I should even be considered for such an appointment.

When, however, General Plumer visited our Headquarters next day, I thanked him for his kindness in selecting me. Whereupon, he remarked in a moment, "I won't have you at all unless you get Mount Sorrel back."

At daybreak on 13th June, 1916, the Canadians recaptured Mount Sorrel and I joined the Second Army that day and thus began that happy association, the memory of which is ever sacred to me and which only ended when I followed his remains into Westminster Abbey.

It is quite beyond me to describe what that association has meant to me during these years. I shall, however, I hope, be able to give some picture of what life in that happy Second Army family meant to all of us who were privileged to serve therein and what our Chief meant to each one of us.

I like to look back on that 13th June, 1916, when I joined the Second Army Headquarters and General Plumer's own Mess, which consisted of the Chief, his Major-General i/c Administration, Major-General Chichester, Major Knowles, Assistant Military Secretary, and two aides-de-camp—Captain Marcus Heywood and Captain Butler.

I was terribly overawed at taking up this new appointment. An Army seemed so enormous. I had never aspired to think in Armies. The Canadian Corps had always seemed to be the limit of my horizon and now I found myself confronted by four corps and all the attendant

THE SECRET OF COMMAND

artillery and other services. I had only one asset and that was that I did know the Ypres Salient, having served with the 49th Division and Canadian Corps in every part and I think I knew all the 33 miles of front line which was held by the Army at that time.

I was soon to learn something of the Chief's methods and to this day I have never failed to try and follow them.

I remember so well just after his brilliant victory of Messines, being asked to what I attributed his success and I replied, "Trust, Training and Thoroughness"—all beginning with a "T." Trust in God and in his Army. He knew the value of Training and left nothing to chance and his Thoroughness was quite remarkable. He took a most active part in the Supply and Medical arrangements behind his Army. No detail escaped him and he spared no effort to see that everything possible was done for those under his Command. I remember once asking him how he acquired all his knowledge of administration and detail behind an Army. He told me that he owed it all to having been Quartermaster-General of the Army.

I was soon to learn his secret of Command. It may well be summed up as Trust. I found myself the first morning at a Conference with the Army Commander. There were also present the Major-General i/c Administration, the Major-General, Royal Artillery, the Major-General, Royal Engineers, the Chief Signal Officer, the Chief Intelligence Officer, the Director-General, Medical Services, the Chief Ordnance Officer, the G.S.O.I., and perhaps one or two others.

Here then was the team through which he

MY CHIEF AND HIS METHODS OF COMMAND

worked and this team, which I had just been privileged to join, were in his real confidence. The Conference always started by the Intelligence Officer giving a little summary of the situation on both the British and enemy front, so we all had the same story. Then, we each in turn brought up any points as regards our own branch of the Staff and took the Chief's orders and decisions and rendered to him an account of our actions during the past twenty-four hours. The great point was that we all knew what every Branch was doing and were thus all in the picture.

Those Conferences were held every morning at 8.30 a.m., or in winter at 5.30 p.m.

Army Headquarters is a very vast machine and the reader may imagine that the Heads of the Staff then spent the day in their offices working this big machine. Far from it in the Second Army. We were Plumer's team. We were privileged to know his mind and his wishes and it was our job to carry his spirit of trust and helpfulness to the lower formations in the Army—to Corps and Divisions and below. It was our business to be out helping others with their difficulties.

Directly after the daily Conference, the Chief with an aide-de-camp went off on his rounds. He must have averaged 100 miles a day. I think most of us did. We used to leave with Signals our general direction, including some Headquarters at which we were certain to call. My tours were generally in the opposite direction to those of the Chief in order to visit as many formations as possible, though we would often arrange to meet during the day at some Corps Headquarters to discuss any problem.

By this means it is fair to say that every Corps

HIS NETWORK OF TRUST

and Divisional Headquarters and most Brigade Headquarters were visited almost daily by either the Chief himself or by one of his team and always with the object of ascertaining if there was anything we could do to help. It was by this means that he won the trust and confidence down to Brigades, but that was not enough. He had a junior Staff Officer or Liaison Officer with each Corps whose duty it was to know every Battalion and to spend at least two nights a week in the front-line trenches and to know those trenches well by day and night and, further, he instituted courses for Commanding Officers at our Second Army School. We had about twelve at a time for about ten days. During which time they could see what went on at various schools and they were all received by the Army Commander. In addition this break gave them a useful rest from the line. It is also true to say that hardly a day passed without the Chief visiting some unit or units which had just come out of the line and many letters I have received testify to the gratitude and encouragement which he extended to them.

I have written at some length on his methods of Command in order to show how he extended his network of trust throughout the whole Army. No easy matter and a veritable triumph for the personality of one man.

It is difficult in these days to picture the size of an Army. I remember the Second Army on two occasions containing over thirty divisions—some three-quarters of a million men, i.e. five times the size of our original Expeditionary Force.

In his daily tours none were forgotten. One moment he was in the forward area visiting various

MY CHIEF AND HIS METHODS OF COMMAND

Headquarters the next he was in the back areas saying a kind and encouraging word to men in rest billets or horse lines, visiting gun positions workshops, railheads, hospitals and Army schools. He made all realize that they were part of his big machine. He had been a regimental soldier and and he never forgot it. He had an intense love and admiration for the British soldier. He impressed on us very firmly that we were nothing but servants of the Troops and he never allowed an order to be issued without considering how it would be received by the regimental officer and soldier.

He realized to the full that all depended on the regimental soldier. The best plans, the best orders in the world could easily end in failure unless you had the trust and goodwill of the regimental soldier. Hence no effort was spared to do our best to help those who served in the Second Army.

Those of us who were privileged to serve in his team know well what we owe to him. His own personality so permeated the whole Army that our task was made easy. We were also received with trust by all formations. They knew that we were his children and brought up on his ideas and that we were a team.

Looking back after all these years, I often wonder why everyone was so good to us and let us go just anywhere we liked without formally visiting the various Corps and Divisional Headquarters *en route*, and, I think it was because they knew that we never carried tales. We were never "spies" or "sneaks." We only existed to help and I think all realized that our Chief would never tolerate Staff Officers who worked on those lines.

PREPARATION FOR ATTACK

The word jealousy never entered into his vocabulary and for that reason every branch of the Staff welcomed instead of rejected points raised by any other branch of the Staff.

Frequently from my daily tours I would bring back administrative and other points raised by the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Signals, etc., and pass them on to be dealt with and the Major-General i/c Administration and others would bring back General Staff points for me. No idea of resentment ever existed. We were just part of the team and all working for the honour of the Second Army and our Chief. It was just a joy to work with men like that.

What I have attempted to describe above has been what I may term his normal method of working in order to carry out his great and responsible task namely the defence of the Ypres Salient.

He realized the conditions under which men had to live and fight to hold that great Trust—the Ypres Salient. His one thought was for his men. He never spared himself in his efforts to do all that was humanly possible for them and it was our privilege to do our best to help him.

Now I come to his method of the preparation of an attack and I will take first of all the preparation of the Battle of Messines, a success to be associated with his name ever after.

The Germans had held the Messines-Wytschaete ridge ever since 1914. This ridge completely dominated the British trenches and had been a veritable menace to our troops for more than two years.

During 1915 and 1916, plans had been prepared for the capture of this ridge and a number of

MY CHIEF AND HIS METHODS OF COMMAND

mines had been prepared under the ridge. It had been the policy of the Commander-in-Chief to prepare plans to strike either from the north—that is from the Ypres Salient—or from the Somme and the Second and Fourth Armies prepared plans accordingly. The Somme offensive was chosen in 1916 and the other in 1917. I remember so well being with the Chief at an Army Commanders' Conference with Sir Douglas Haig, the Commander-in-Chief. That was on 7th May, 1917. Sir Douglas Haig announced that the attack on Messines would be carried out with a view to a further advance to the north-east. Sir Douglas asked our Chief when he would be in a position to attack the Messines-Wytschaete ridge and he replied, "To-day month, sir," and it was so. We came back that day full of hope. The Second Army had its chance at last. We were going to be tried out. It was a wonderful month. Everything we wanted we were given. Almost every day more guns, and more divisions, etc. arrived.

The battle of MESSINES

Corps boundaries.....

Divisional boundaries.....

CORPS

DIVISIONS

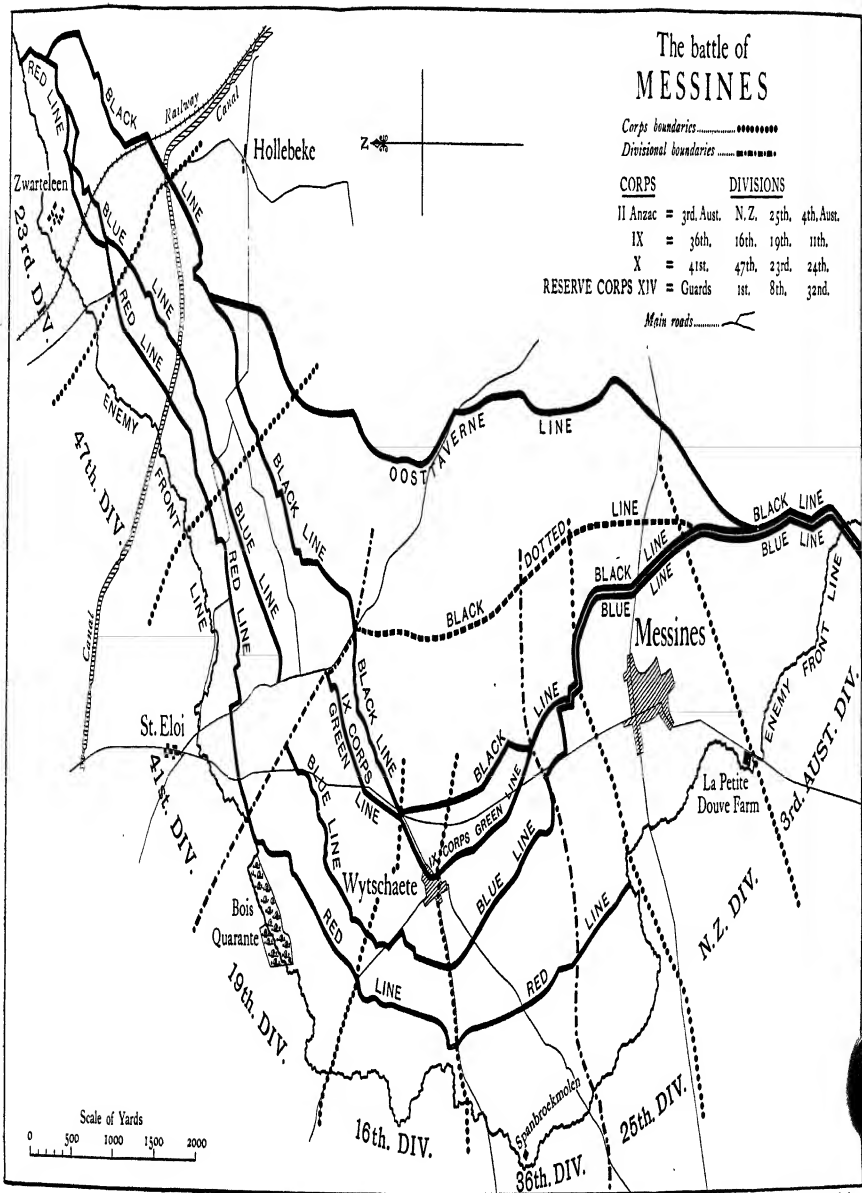
II Anzac = 3rd. Aust. N. Z. 25th. 4th. Aust.

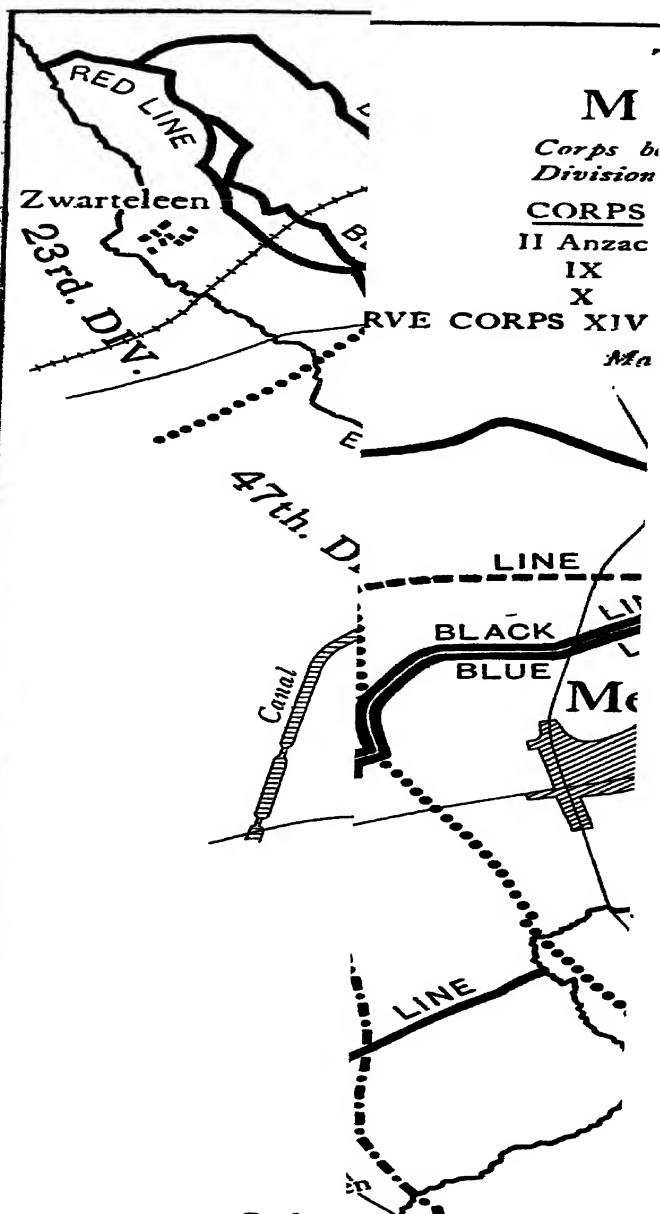
IX = 36th. 16th. 19th. 11th.

X = 41st. 47th. 23rd. 24th.

RESERVE CORPS XIV = Guards 1st. 8th. 32nd.

Main roads.....





CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

I HAD not intended in this " memoir " to go into much detail of the Battle of Messines, but in view of the fact that attacks have been made on the men who bore the responsibility of command in the late War, I am bound to set forth in greater detail the preparations for that battle.

The following is just a summary of the Messines operations for which I am indebted to the Official Historian :

At an Inter-Allied Conference held in Paris on the 4th-5th May, 1917, after the failure of the Nivelle offensive, it was unanimously agreed that it was " indispensable to continue offensive operations on the Western Front . . . the methods to adopt and put in practice, the choice of the moment and of the place of the different attacks are the business of the generals responsible " ; Mr. Lloyd George adding, " the enemy must not be left in peace one moment." Two days later, on the 7th May, at an Army Commanders' Conference at Doullens, Sir Douglas Haig issued his instructions announcing that the main effort would " now be transferred to the north with the ultimate object of securing the Belgian Coast and of obtaining further strategic results." The operations were to be carried out in two phases :

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

- (a) The attack on the Messines-Wytschaete ridge to secure the right flank for further operations.
- (b) "Northern operations" (that is "Passchendaele") a few weeks later, with a view to securing the Belgian Coast.

Sir D. Haig had ever since he became Commander-in-Chief been in favour of recovering the Messines ridge, freeing Ypres, and driving the enemy from the coast. Preparation for the first item had been begun as early as June, 1915, and on the 14th January, 1916, within a month of his taking command, he definitely instructed Sir Herbert Plumer to consider, among others, a scheme for an offensive against the ridge. On the 10th April, after examination of the various schemes, he decided that the preparations for the capture of the ridge should be proceeded with and that mining should be included in them. On the 30th May he warned General Plumer to push on with his preparations with all possible speed as, if the Somme offensive met with considerable opposition, it might be decided to stop it and proceed with the Messines operation. Lack of labour and material made the work of preparation (roads, railways, dumps, etc.) slow, but the majority of the mines were ready by June, 1916.

The troops allotted for the 1917 operations were :

II Anzac Corps : 3rd Australian, New Zealand, 25th and 4th Australian ;

IX Corps : 36th, 16th, 19th and 11th Divisions ;

X Corps : 41st, 47th, 23rd, 24th Divisions ;

Reserve Corps (XIV) : Guards, 1st, 8th, 32nd Divisions.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the operation were :

- (a) To capture the enemy position on Messines ridge from St. Yves to Observatory ridge, a front of about 9 miles ;
- (b) to capture as many as possible of the enemy's guns behind the ridge ;
- (c) to consolidate a position to secure possession of the ridge and establish a series of posts in advance. This second objective was subsequently defined as the Oosteraverne line, which stretched like a chord across the base of the Wytschaete salient.

I have mentioned in the previous chapter that it was on the 7th May that General-Plumer told the Commander-in-Chief that he would be ready to carry out the attack on the 7th June.

I have before me every order and instruction issued from the 10th May onwards to the Corps concerned.

They recall to my memory his most amazing attention to every detail. They recall his conferences with his Corps Commanders and the decisions taken, the gradual building up of the picture. He knew so well how much depended on the artillery plan. He viewed that from the Infantry point of view. Whilst the Infantry were training in back areas or on our model near the Scherpenberg, he was perfecting the artillery arrangements. We actually carried out artillery and machine-gun rehearsals on the enemy.

I extract the following from instructions which I issued on his behalf :

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

"It is of paramount importance that the enemy should be forced to disclose his batteries and that the same should be overpowered before the attack is launched. In order to make his decisions regarding the above it is essential that the Army Commander should be kept in the closest touch with the opinions of Corps Commanders regarding :

"(a) the progress of wire cutting ;

"(b) the progress of destruction ;

"(c) the progress of counter-battery work.

"For this purpose a General Staff Officer and an Artillery Staff Officer from the Army Staff will visit Corps each afternoon from now onwards to obtain the latest impressions, etc."

So characteristic of his thoroughness. His Infantry were not going to be launched at uncut wire and we had to cut through 280 miles of it.

I quote another extract issued on the 3rd June, 1917, to Corps concerned :

"The Army Commander has directed me to bring the following points in connection with to-day's rehearsals to your notice for necessary action.

(Here follow some technical points about the Artillery.) "Reports should be obtained from the *Infantry* on the experience of to-day's rehearsal and a summary thereof forwarded to A.H.Q. The barrage appeared to be thin and was so. It should be explained to the *Infantry* that not more than 72% of the guns were firing to-day as the latest arrivals had not been registered."

ZERO HOUR

I quote that to show his constant thought for the Infantry soldier. In all battles it is difficult to settle the exact hour of attack. In this one especially was this the case on account of the mines. A certain time has to be allowed for the falling debris before the Infantry can advance. This required very careful calculation and I have before me the tests carried out by Colonel Mitchell, G.S.O. Intelligence and other Staff Officers of Second Army H.Q., on days previous to the attack calculating that at 2.45 a.m. a man was just discernible at seventy-five yards' distance—at 3 a.m. at hundred yards etc. That at 2.30 a.m. ground broken with shell-holes could be passed with difficulty and that at 3.15 a.m. irregularities could be easily discerned. That at 2.30 a.m. new wire could be seen one and a half yards away—old rusty wire one yard away, etc. etc.

From these calculations the Army Commander himself decided that zero hour should be at 3.10 a.m. It makes one wonder whether critics are right when they say that our Commanders in the late War were callous of life and that it is hoped that we may be spared from such Commanders in the next war. As a story of Messines I think that I cannot do better than quote from a document entitled *The Battle of Messines*, which I issued in July, 1917. It begins with the following description of the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge :

“ The Messines—Wytschaete Ridge, which rises from the River Douve in the south, comprises the plateau, on which are situated the villages of Messines and Wytschaete, and extends northwards by the Damm Strasse (sunken road) to the White

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

Chateau on the South bank of the Ypres—Comines Canal. The high ground continues North of the canal, through Hill 60, Observatory Ridge and Stirling Castle towards Zonnebeke.

"This position, which dominated the Ypres salient, gave to the enemy complete observation of our front system of trenches and forward battery positions, and it had been strongly fortified by the Germans during the two-and-a-half years during which it had been in their possession."

The following is a summary of what happened :

The attack was delivered at 3.10 a.m. on the 7th June.

The nineteen mines on the front of attack, containing 957,000 lb. of explosive, were fired at zero, blowing up large portions of the enemy's front line and support trenches, and causing great demoralization and loss of the garrisons of the trenches.

The artillery barrage opened simultaneously, and the infantry advanced to the assault after the debris and shock of the mines had subsided.

Previous to the day of attack, six Brigades, R.F.A., five 6-in. howitzer batteries and a 60-pdr. battery had been placed in action as far forward as possible without being actually in view. These batteries did not open fire till zero hour.

Owing to the previous effective wire cutting and trench bombardment, the infantry were able to carry the whole of the enemy's front-line system within a few minutes. Following closely the artillery barrage, our troops pressed on up the western slopes of the ridge with scarcely a pause, and within three hours of the commencement of

TANKS

the attack had stormed the crest of the ridge along the whole front of the attack.

The garrisons of the village of Wytschaete and the White Chateau, south of the Ypres-Comines Canal, held out for some time, but their resistance was overcome by the attacking waves of infantry, and by 10 a.m. the objective line, East of Messines-Wytschaete, the Damm Strasse and Hill 60, had been captured by the assaulting troops. Only in one locality in Battle Wood, north of the Ypres-Comines Canal, did the enemy continue to offer resistance.

Tanks were started from behind the infantry assembly trenches and followed the infantry advance; the success of the infantry, however, did not afford many opportunities for effective action by tanks before the first objective lines had been gained. Fifteen out of forty tanks were able to reach their objectives near the Damm Strasse and east of Wytschaete, and afforded moral, as well as material, support, besides drawing on themselves hostile fire which would otherwise have been directed against the infantry.

A halt was made on the objective line east of Messines and Wytschaete for about five hours, during which the captured position was reconnoitred by the attacking troops and the work of consolidation was commenced. During this interval infantry and cavalry patrols pushed forward in advance, supported by tanks, in order to prevent the enemy removing guns and to clear the ground to the east of Wytschaete for the further advance.

Before the attack on the Oosttaverne Line began, some forty batteries of field artillery and several sections of 6-in. howitzers and 60-pdrs. had moved to previously selected forward positions

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

for the more effective support of the operation. These were chiefly from the centre corps, whose objective had the greatest depth.

About 2.30 p.m. the enemy attempted to launch a local counter-attack just north and south of Messines, but was driven back by our artillery, rifle and Lewis-gun fire.

At 3.10 p.m. a further advance was made against the Oosttaverne Line by fresh troops supported by tanks, which had been brought forward after the Line east of Messines and Wytschaete had been captured. These troops advanced through the original assaulting columns and pushed down the eastern slopes of the ridge. Within an hour the Oosttaverne Line had been captured with the exception of a small portion east of Messines, which fell into our hands on the following morning.

During the evening of the 7th June another local counter-attack was delivered by the enemy east of Messines, but failed to drive back our troops.

The brunt of our attack fell on the 2nd (Prussian) Division, the 35th (Prussian) Division, the 40th (Saxon) Division and the 3rd (Bavarian) Division : the latter division being involved in a relief of the 40th (Saxon) Division when the attack commenced.

These four enemy divisions suffered great losses, both in casualties and prisoners, and were withdrawn from action, taking no further part in the subsequent fighting.

The 204th (Württemberg) Division and the 4th (Bavarian) Division on the flanks also suffered heavy losses.

The 1st Guard Reserve Division was brought forward on the evening of the 7th June to relieve

COUNTER-ATTACK

the 3rd (Bavarian) Division and delivered the second unsuccessful counter-attack.

During the night of the 7th–8th June our troops established themselves in positions :

- (a) On the main line of defence east of Messines and Wytschaete ;
- (b) On the advanced position in the Oosttaverne Line.

The work of consolidation was carried out by the troops who had captured the positions, and, in the meantime, additional field-artillery batteries, 60-pdr. batteries and 6-in. howitzer batteries were pushed forward to the eastern slopes of the ridge so as to bring fire to bear at closer range covering our new positions.

On the evening of the 8th June the enemy delivered a strong counter-attack against the whole front of attack after a heavy bombardment, but was unable to penetrate our advanced positions at any point.

At least three enemy divisions—the 7th Division, 24th (Saxon) Division, 1st Guard Reserve Division—and portions of the 4th (Bavarian) and 16th (Bavarian) Divisions took part in this counter-attack, but were unable to make any progress in the face of artillery, machine-gun and rifle fire.

After the 8th June patrols were sent forward by us from the Oosttaverne Line and advanced posts established at various points.

Our positions were strengthened, artillery moved forward, roads opened up, signal communications established, light railways and water-supply systems extended to forward positions.

On the 11th June the enemy's positions in the vicinity of the Potterie Farm, south-east of Mes-

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

sines, were captured, which deprived him of a fortified locality, with communication trenches to Warneton, in which he had been able to organize local counter-attacks against our positions near Messines.

On the 12th June the enemy was suspected of withdrawing from his front line between the River Lys and the right of our new position south of Messines. Reconnaissances by patrols and air reconnaissances confirmed this movement subsequently.

On the 14th June a further advance was made along the whole front, and new line established, covering the crossings of the River Lys as far as Warneton on the south, and clearing up the situation in Battle Wood, north of the Ypres-Comines Canal.

The enemy offered no serious resistance to this further advance.

The success of the operations may be attributed to :

- (a) The exceptionally good counter-battery work, trench bombardment, wire cutting, and barrage work by the artillery.
- (b) The determination and valour of the assaulting infantry, who were animated by a splendid fighting spirit.
- (c) The fine work of the Flying Corps, who allowed nothing to deter them from the effective execution of the tasks allotted to them.
- (d) Good Staff work, not only in the previous preparations, but also in the co-ordination of the work of the various arms during the operations.

CAUSES OF ENEMY'S DEFEAT

- (e) The systematic training of all troops beforehand, so that all ranks were aware of the tasks which they had to carry out and the ground over which they would have to work.
- (f) The careful preparation of the administrative arrangements for railways, roads, water supply, ammunition supply, etc.
- (g) The successful explosion of the mines.

On the other hand, the causes which led to the enemy's defeat may be summarized as follows :

- (a) The date and hour of the attack do not appear to have been anticipated, although he was well aware of the impending attack and approximately the front on which it could be expected.
- (b) His troops in the line were exhausted by the artillery preparation, which not only lowered their *moral*, but also prevented rations and water reaching them during the last few days.
- (c) The destruction of his artillery in the Oosttaverne Group which prevented effective artillery support being given to his infantry when the attack was launched.
- (d) The use of gas projectiles and gas projectors which caused casualties and constant precautions against this form of attack.
- (e) The demoralization of the troops holding the front and support trenches, caused by the mine explosions.

The total number of prisoners captured during the operations from 1st to 20th June amounted to 7,261, including 150 officers ; while 51 guns, 242

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

machine guns, and 60 trench mortars, fell into our hands.

I append a copy of messages received from His Majesty the King and H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and also the Special Order of the Day issued by the Commander-in-Chief.

The following telegrams are published for the information of all ranks :

“ To FIELD-MARSHAL SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, from
HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

“ 9.6.17.

“ I rejoice that, thanks to thorough preparation and splendid co-operation of all Arms the important Messines Ridge, which has been the scene of so many memorable struggles, is again in our hands. Tell General Plumer and the Second Army how proud we are of this achievement by which, in a few hours, the enemy was driven out of strongly entrenched position held by him for two-and-a-half years.”

“ From FIELD-MARSHAL SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, to
HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

“ 9.6.17.

“ Your Majesty's gracious message has been read with intense pride and gratification by all who have taken part in the operations on the Messines Ridge.

“ In the name of myself and Staff, General Plumer and all ranks of the Second Army, I beg to offer our respectful thanks to Your Majesty.

“ (Signed) D. HAIG, F.M.

“ C.-in-C., British Armies in France.”

CONGRATULATIONS

“GENERAL SIR HERBERT PLUMER.

“As an old Chief of yours may I offer you and your Army my congratulations on your splendid success and am glad to hear your losses have not been too heavy.

“CONNAUGHT.”

“ORDER OF THE DAY.

“The complete success of the attack made yesterday by the Second Army under the command of General Sir Herbert Plumer is an earnest of the eventual final victory of the Allied cause.

“The position assaulted was one of very great natural strength, on the defences of which the enemy had laboured incessantly for nearly three years. Its possession overlooking the whole of the Ypres Salient was of the greatest tactical and strategical value to the enemy.

“The excellent observation which he had from this position added enormously to the difficulty of our preparations for the attack and ensured to him ample warning of our intentions. He was therefore fully prepared for our assault and had brought up reinforcements of men and guns to meet it.

“He had the further advantage of the experience gained by him from many previous defeats in battles such as the Somme, the Ancre, Arras and Vimy Ridge. On the lessons to be drawn from these he had issued carefully thought-out instructions.

“Despite all these advantages the enemy has been completely defeated. Within the space of a few hours all our objectives were gained, with undoubtedly very severe loss to the Germans.

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

Our own casualties were, for a battle of such magnitude, most gratifyingly light.

"The full effect of this victory cannot be estimated yet, but that it will be very great is certain.

"Following on the great successes already gained it affords final and conclusive proof that neither strength of position nor knowledge of and timely preparation to meet impending assault can save the enemy from complete defeat, and that, brave and tenacious as the German troops are, it is only a question of how much longer they can endure the repetition of such blows.

"Yesterday's victory was due to causes which always have given and always will give success, viz.: the utmost skill, valour and determination in the execution of the attack following on the greatest forethought and thoroughness in preparation for it.

"I desire to place on record here my deep appreciation of the splendid work done, above and below ground as well as in the air, by all Army, Services, and Departments, and by the Commanders and Staffs by whom, under Sir Herbert Plumer's orders, all means at our disposal were combined, both in preparation and in execution, with a skill, devotion and bravery beyond all praise.

"The great success gained has brought us a long step nearer to the final, victorious, end of the War, and the Empire will be justly proud of the troops who have added such fresh lustre to its arms.

"D. HAIG,

"Field-Marshal,

"Commanding-in-Chief,

"British Armies in France.

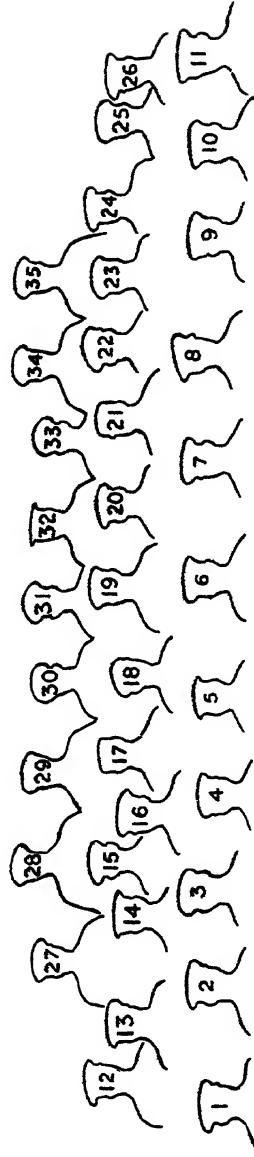
"Adv. G.H.Q.

"8th June, 1917."

1. COL. A. B. R. HILDEBRAND, D.S.O.,
D.D. Signals.
2. LT.-COL. C. H. MITCHELL, C.M.G.,
D.S.O.
General Staff (1)—Intelligence.
3. LT.-COL. W. ROBERTSON, D.S.O.
General Staff (1)—Operations.
4. MAJ.-GEN. F. M. GLURB, C.B.,
D.S.O.
Chief Engineer.

11. COL. T. W. HALE, C.M.G.
D.D. Ordnance Services.
Camp Commandant.
12. MAJOR F. ST. J. HUGHES, C.M.G.,
Camp Commandant.
13. LT.-COL. A. G. STEVENSON, C.M.G.,
D.S.O.
Controller of Mines.
14. REV. G. STANDING, M.C.
Asst. Principal Chaplain.
15. LT.-COL. B. B. CROZIER, D.S.O.
Staff Officer to G.O.C. R.A.

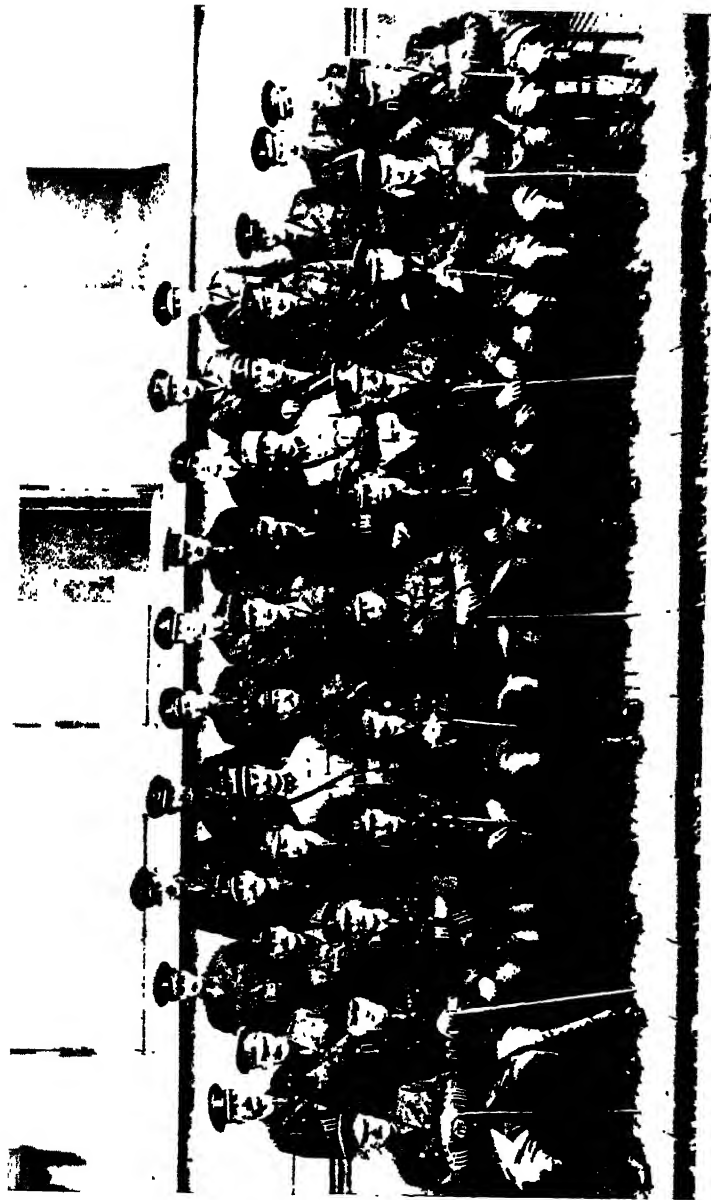
23. MAJOR G. M. DARTILL, M.C.,
D.A.C.M.G.
24. REV. F. I. ANDERSON, C.M.G.,
Asst. Chaplain-General.
25. CAPT. A. C. P. BUTLER
A.D.C.
26. CAPT. P. DE FONBLANQUET
Staff Officer, R.F.
27. CAPT. C. K. PHILLIPS,
Staff Captain A.A.C.



5. MAJ.-GEN. C. H. HARRINGTON, C.B.,
D.S.O.
M.G., General Staff.
6. GEN. SIR H. C. O. PLUMER, G.C.M.G.,
K.C.B., A.D.C.
Commanding Second Army.
7. MAJ.-GEN. A. A. CHICHESTER, C.B.,
D.S.O.
Dep. Adj. and Q.M. Gen.
8. MAJ.-GEN. G. MCK. FRANKS, C.B.,
G.O.C. Royal Artillery.
9. SURG.-GEN. R. PORTER, C.B.,
D. Medical Services.
10. LT.-COL. E. S. BURDER, C.M.G.,
A.D.C.

16. LT. F. D. L. GREEN
A.D.C.
17. COMDT. COMTE DE MALLEISSAY-
MELUN, M.C.
French Liaison Officer.
18. MAJOR W. HEYN
Belgian Liaison Officer.
19. MAJOR J. KNOWLES
Asst. Military Secretary
20. LT.-COL. H. W. JACKSON
Asst. Q.M. Gen.
21. COMDT. M. CLAUDE, M.C.
French Mission.
22. CAPT F. C. BEDWELL.
(General Staff 1st)

28. MAJOR R. S. ARBOTHNOT, M.C.
General Staff (1)
29. LT.-COL. W. H. TRIVLER, D.S.O.
Provost Marshal
30. CAPT. J. H. HAWKINS, M.C.
Staff Captain R.A.
31. MAJOR N. L. CRAIG
D.A.D. Supplies.
32. CAPT. P. E. LONGMORE,
D.A.A.G.
33. CAPT. W. GORDON
Staff Captain Reserve R.A.
34. CAPT M. B. HEYWOOD, D.S.O.
(General Staff 1st)
35. CAPT. H. T. STARKES, M.C.,
(General Staff 1st)



STAFF OF THE SECOND ARMY, JUNE, 1917.

Taken just after Messines.

SETTLING OF THE PLAN

Before leaving Messines it might be of interest to my readers if I gave a short account of how my Chief set about preparing for the Messines operations which he carried through so successfully.

His first object was to settle the plan. This he did by Conferences with his Corps Commanders and they in turn with their Divisional Commanders. The latter, no doubt, adopted the same course with their Brigade Commanders. The greatest difficulty in the preparation of an attack in static warfare is :

- (a) To settle the main objective.
- (b) To settle the various stages towards getting it.
- (c) To settle the line of attack.
- (d) To settle the pace of the barrage.

These are matters on which those concerned never agree.

It is interesting, therefore, to relate how he dealt with them. The answer really is by personal contact with the Commanders concerned. He held Conferences at various Corps Headquarters so as to save the Corps Commanders coming up to Cassel. He visited Divisional and Brigade Commanders daily and discovered their plans and got their ideas. We all did the same in order to help them and keep them in the whole picture and thus, when the orders were finally issued, every Commander felt that he had at any rate been consulted and had had his way and had talked personally to the Chief. He might not agree as to the pace of the barrage or the hour of attack, but anyhow he had been asked. All cheerfully accepted the final decision and put their best into it. Similarly the Major-General, Royal

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

Artillery, kept them informed of the intensive artillery support they were going to receive, the greatest concentration in the whole War. And in addition, a huge model of the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge was constructed near The Scherpenberg. It was about the size of two croquet lawns. On this all those taking part down to Platoon Commanders were able to study the ground.

It was a wonderful study of human nature. He treated the whole Army as a family. He took them all into his confidence and trusted them. They trusted him and that Army went into the Battle of Messines in great heart knowing that their Chief had done everything possible for them.

I quote the above, as I fear there were instances in the War of the reverse of the picture. When lower formations were not consulted but merely ordered into action with the result that they thought that neither the stages, nor the time of attack, nor the pace of the barrage was correct, and, therefore, did not start in good heart. Simply the difference between the art of commanding by trust as against distrust.

What, however, I have written so far regarding Messines has had all to do with the battle plans. No one realized more fully than my Chief the fact that the most brilliant plans depend for success on what happens behind and that was where his great knowledge of organization came in. The days he spent visiting Railheads, Dumps, etc., with the Major General i/c Administration, or Gun positions and railways to them with the Major-General, Royal Artillery. Hospitals, etc., with the Director General Medical Services. Signal communications with the Chief Signal Officer. Repair shops, etc., with the Chief Ordnance Officer.

NOTHING LEFT TO CHANCE

Engineering works and roads with the Major-General, Royal Engineers. Mining detail with the Officer i/c Mines. The Tank programme with the Officer Commanding Tanks. Air photographs and Intelligence with the General Staff Officer (Intelligence). The Air programme with the Officer Commanding, Air Wing. Every detail of the Artillery preparations with the Major-General, Royal Artillery.

Units training for the attack in back areas were visited by him.

Nothing whatever was left to chance. He kept his finger on every pulse and the whole Army knew it.

Each morning during that month the picture was being fitted in. Our daily Conferences were of intense interest, when we were each able to report how the various tasks were progressing.

In my position as Major-General, General Staff, of the Army, I visited the Brigadier-Generals, General Staff of Corps daily and found the same enthusiasm in all their preparations and used to return at night to tell the Chief that all appeared to be going well.

About this time our head Intelligence Officer, Colonel C. H. Mitchell (Canadian Corps), evolved a system of having a sausage balloon behind each Corps all connected to a forward report centre at Locre, which would be connected by telephone to my Office at Army Headquarters at Cassel and by which I should be in instant communication with the progress of the battle on each Corps front. It was very ingenious and included information from O.P.'s, sound ranging, flash spotting, directional wireless, message dropping from aeroplanes, etc.

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

I also during this time attended the Conferences of the Major-General, Royal Artillery, with all his Artillery Commanders and listened with interest to the preparations to launch the biggest concentration of Artillery in history. The preparation of that Artillery plan was a fine bit of work and reflected much credit on the M.G.R.A. and the Artillery Commanders.

I have tried to give a picture of how our Chief built up the operation of Messines in every detail and how he worked the whole Army as a family and it is interesting to note that the final orders for the battle of Messines did not cover half a sheet of foolscap.

Everyone knew his job and only wanted an order when to start.

I remember so well on the day before the battle, namely, 6th June, 1917. I was rung up by General Headquarters to say that they were sending up the whole of the Press Correspondents to see the battle and asking me to give them any information I thought fit. I recollect how these gentlemen, whom I had never met before, arrived at Cassel about 5 p.m. They included Perry Robinson, of *The Times*, Philip Gibbs, Beach Thomas, Herbert Russell and others. I received them all and, having put them on their honour, I told them the whole plan for the morrow and told them if they came back at 5 p.m. the following day that I would tell them how much of the plan we had been able to accomplish.

It was with no little pride that I was able to tell them that our beloved Chief had succeeded in taking every objective and at a cost of one-fifth of the casualties we had anticipated.

I treasure greatly an album presented to me by

THE EVE OF BATTLE

those War Correspondents containing cuttings from their various newspapers on the Battle of Messines. This was given me in recognition of the confidence I placed in them in giving them our plans.

How well I remember the eve of Messines. For the first time in my life I went to bed at 9 p.m. There was nothing more I could do. The Troops were then on the move. Zero was at 3.10 a.m. We all had breakfast at 2.30 a.m. with the Army Commander. The rest of us went to the top of Cassel Hill to see the mines go up. Five hundred tons of explosive. I can see the glow in the sky as I write. Not so the Army Commander. He was kneeling by his bedside praying for those gallant officers and men who were at that moment attacking.

After that he was with me in my Office as news began to come in from our forward report centre—news from our sausage balloons—an eye-witness account such as we are now accustomed to on the wireless. All was going well. The first objective gained—on they all went to the second objective—The Messines-Wytschaete Ridge was ours. I can feel his hand on my shoulder now as the news came through. There were tears in his eyes. He was thinking of those glorious men who had done it. Could we hold it? What about the enemy counter-attack? At this moment there were reports of an enemy counter-attack from the direction of Warneton. We had three mines at the front edge of Ploegsteert Wood which we had purposely not blown as being outside our attack. If the counter-attack from Warneton developed it would pass over those mines. I got in touch with our Officer i/c Mines and deliberately planned to blow those

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES

mines as the counter-attack passed over them. It would have been terrible and I hated the idea, but I suppose it was war. I was very glad that the counter-attack never materialized.

Another incident occurred when we were in that room. A tank of ours was disabled on the top of the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge and the sausage balloon reported that it was being heavily shelled from a Battery which they could see and of which they could give the location. In a moment I was able to tell our Wing Commander. In thirteen minutes that Battery was bombed and silenced and our tank escaped.

It was a great relief that night when we heard that we were firmly established and that the enemy showed no signs of attacking.

It always interests me as I do not think anyone from the Army Commander downwards ever thought that we were undertaking an operation which would be welcomed and appraised as it was. It never even occurred to me. I knew that we were carrying out a well-prepared task on a limited objective and that was all. I think the Army Commander was equally bewildered by the telegrams of congratulations which he received on every side.

I went over the Ridge next morning, partly by Tank, and I shall never forget the sight. I remember so well going into a concrete dug-out near Spanbroekmolen—our biggest crater—and finding four German Officers sitting round a table—all dead—killed by shock. They might have been playing bridge. It was an uncanny sight—not a mark on any of them. I can see their ghastly white faces as I write. In the wallet of one of them was found a copy of a message sent

THE KING ON MESSINES RIDGE

at 2.40 a.m.—30 minutes before zero—saying “Situation comparatively quiet.”

Standing on the Ridge and looking back at what had been the British line for all that time, one wondered how the British soldier had existed. The only answer to that is no one but the British soldier could have existed. I have been there many times since. I still marvel at it all.

And so ended the Battle of Messines—planned—supervised in every detail by our great Chief, carried out by his devoted Army.

His Staff a family, his Army a family. All rejoicing that the Father of the family had gained such a splendid success.

The situation with the Messines Ridge in our hands was very different as regards the comfort of the troops.

Nothing but ruins remained of the villages of Messines and Wytschaete. We recovered the Bell of Wytschaete Church and I was present with the Army Commander when he restored it to the late King of the Belgians, a very simple but impressive ceremony.

About this time both His Majesty the King and His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught visited the Messines Ridge. Two of His Majesty's Staff were actually examining the sign-post at Wyschaete cross-roads when the enemy dropped some heavy stuff there. They fortunately escaped and had to rejoin the party at top speed, much to the King's amusement.

The King spent a few days in a Chateau at Cassel and made an extensive tour of the Army area, which was much appreciated.

The next few months were spent in preparation for the capture of Passchendaele.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PART PLAYED BY THE SECOND ARMY IN THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

BEFORE writing the story of Passchendaele from the Second Army point of view, I want to make it clear to my readers that I am not writing the history of that fighting. That will be done by the Official Historian. Neither am I writing, as others have done since the war, with a knowledge of both sides, which makes it easy to criticize, especially when those who shouldered the burden and responsibility have been taken from us. I am merely concerned in trying to give a true picture of my old Chief facing the tasks with which he was confronted. It is, therefore, fortunate that, as I write, I have before me the following documents :

- (a) Intelligence summaries and appreciations showing exactly what we knew of the enemy in front of us. His units, gun positions, dumps, reserves, Headquarters, etc.
- (b) The Second Army orders for every operation up to the capture of Passchendaele.
- (c) A summary of how and by whom each operation was carried out and the results attained.

All the above were compiled by the Second Army Staff and were signed and issued by myself

UNFAIR CRITICISM

as secret documents with the approval of the Army Commander. They admit of no dispute. They are the evidence by which my Chief's reputation as regards Passchendaele stands or falls.

I ask my readers to picture him faced with the task entrusted to him by his Commander-in-Chief, entrusted also with the command at times of some three-quarters of a million men, studying every fraction of information regarding the enemy over the hill, sparing no effort to ensure that his army should be engaged under the best available conditions. On his decision and by his command the orders referred to above were issued.

It is easy to criticize when from German and other writers one knows now the picture of what was the other side of the hill. To discover that was the problem facing those in High Command. We, as his Staff, could but compile and put before him what we believed to be the enemy situation after carefully weighing the value of our information. In many cases, no doubt, it was inaccurate. In many cases, no doubt, the enemy information regarding our positions was inaccurate. We were only human.

Our British Commanders have been subjected in many quarters since the War to such unfair criticism that I want again, before telling the Second Army story of Passchendaele to picture the Army Commander, the man who had held the Ypres Salient for two years at that time against many odds, tackling this difficult problem. If I can show my readers that in his plans and arrangements he did everything humanly possible for the men he loved, before he committed them to that task, from which so many never came back, then I venture to hope that his characteristics of loyalty,

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

thoroughness and devotion to duty may be still further enhanced.

The capture of the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge in June, 1917, had prepared the way for the second or northern part of Sir Douglas Haig's programme of advancing north-east to secure the Belgian Coast.

I may say that it was Sir D. Haig's original intention that the northern portion of the attack should be entrusted to the Fourth Army under the late General Sir H. Rawlinson, as both he and his Chief Staff Officer, General Sir A. A. Montgomery Massingberd (now C.I.G.S.), came up to stay with General Plumer in order to reconnoitre the ground and we always thought that the capture of the Passchendaele-Staden Ridge and the subsequent advance towards Bruges and the coast, was to be a combined operation by the Second and Fourth Armies.

This was, however, altered and we received instructions from G.H.Q. that the first stage would be the capture of the Passchendaele-Staden Ridge. After this had been secured Sir D. Haig hoped to secure the line approximately Thorout-Couckerlaere and to co-operate with the Fourth Army (General Sir Henry Rawlinson) which had been assembled near the Coast, and also with the Navy. Their object was to capture Nieuport and the coast to the east of it. For this object thirty-four British and six French divisions were collected.

The main attack was to be made in the centre by the Fifth Army (General Sir H. Gough) on a seven-mile front Hooge-Pilkem with ten of its sixteen divisions.

The Second Army (General Sir H. Plumer) was to cover its right on a six-mile front with five of

- [illegible]

1914-1918

PLUMER'S ENDORSEMENT

its thirteen divisions. The Army boundary ran between Zillebeke and Hollebeke. The French First Army (General Anthoine) was to attack on the left of the Fifth Army with two of its six divisions.

General Sir H. Rawlinson's Fourth Army (four divisions) had been secretly collected near the Coast with the object of co-operating with the Navy after the main attack had secured the Passchendaele-Staden Ridge.

The plan was quite clear. The capture of the Messines Ridge had made it possible and it certainly appeared to us that the capture of the Passchendaele-Staden Ridge would give us the jumping-off ground from which to prepare for the further advance outlined above.

It was, I understand, all important at that time to draw pressure away from the main French Army. This plan was certain to achieve that result. Sir Douglas Haig warned us in a memorandum on 30th June shortly after Messines that the fundamental object on the operations was the defeat of the German Army and that this could not be achieved in a single battle and that we must make preparations for "very hard fighting lasting perhaps for weeks" and that we must arrange to deliver a series of organized attacks on a large scale and on broad frontages.

I can say without any hesitation that my Chief, General Sir H. Plumer, welcomed and endorsed the plan. He had known what it was to have his troops sitting day after day and winter after winter under the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge and in front of Ypres, with the enemy holding all the commanding ground. The capture of Broodseinde, Passchendaele, Westroosebeek, Staden was

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

the only solution to the holding of the Ypres Salient and the Germans knew it only too well.

Some writers have been kind enough to describe the capture of the Messines Ridge as a life-saving operation as the casualties were only a fifth of what we feared and it certainly did put an end to an intolerable situation. At the same time I venture to think that if it had not been for the appalling conditions of weather and mud, which I shall refer to later, the capture of the above-mentioned line would have taken us a long way on the road to final victory. In all the painful and bitter criticisms which I have read charging our great commanders with not having abandoned the plans on account of weather and mud, I have not met one who has been bold enough to suggest a line on which we "could" have remained for the coming winter. Lines on maps are very easy things to draw. Lines on the ground where troops can live under the muzzles of enemy rifle, machine and gun fire are very hard to find. I am not writing without personal knowledge of the actual conditions both of the weather and of the ground at that time. Just after our capture of the Broodseinde Ridge on 4th October, I reconnoitred the Bellevue position under the most appalling conditions prior to the attack of 12th October. It has been said that it was between the above dates that Sir Douglas Haig should have abandoned all further operations. On that I can make no criticism. I was not in a position to know the various factors which influenced him. I certainly never heard the question either raised or mentioned. Most of the conferences during that period of the Passchendaele fighting between August and November, of Sir Douglas Haig and his Army Com-

" UNTHINKABLE " MATTERS

manders (Generals Plumer and Gough), were held actually in my own office over my own map. One writer has stated that my Chief was always opposed to the Passchendaele operations and urged Sir Douglas Haig to abandon them and also that he is reported to have written a letter opposing or throwing cold water on the whole operations. Furthermore, it has been said that my Chief told the writer on our way through Paris to Italy that he was very glad to get away from the Western Front.

Few Staff Officers, I am sure in history, have been so privileged to share the innermost thoughts and actions of their Chief as I was and the matters I have been forced to mention above are just "unthinkable." To enforce this point I must mention the fact that during the whole period during which I was privileged to serve him I only recollect his writing three official documents himself—one was a telegram from Italy. The other two were telegrams—one to the Prime Minister and the other to the Secretary of State for War—from Constantinople concerning the situation at the time of Chanak when he came up to pay me a visit and to help his old Staff Officer. He always stated his views quite clearly and then trusted me to prepare a draft for his approval or otherwise. It is, therefore, inconceivable to me that his agreement with the views of the Commander-in-Chief was anything but one of "*utter loyalty*" and desire to carry out his Chief's orders to capture Passchendaele. He knew well what that ridge would mean to his beloved troops and I am sure that once within grasp, as it was after his successful capture of the Broodseinde Ridge on 4th October, he never gave a thought to stopping and turning

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back. I am sure that all the Second Army Staff, who were privileged with me to serve him, will support that statement, and also the fact that no one hated being sent to Italy and leaving the Ypres Salient, which he had held for so long, more than our Chief. No one was more delighted to return to it in the following March than he was. I said earlier that I had studied that ground in front of Passchendaele. I have studied it since both from where our line was on 4th October and from the Passchendaele-Staden Ridge. I still ask the critics to state where our advanced troops could have spent the winter of 1917.

In theory anywhere. In practice nowhere. We find these convenient lines in War Games but not in War. I have knelt in the Tynecot Cemetery below Passchendaele on that hallowed ground, the most beautiful and sacred place I know in this world, I have prayed in that cemetery oppressed with fear lest even one of those gallant comrades should have lost his life owing to any fault or neglect on the part of myself and the Second Army Staff. It is a fearful responsibility to have been the one who signed and issued all the Second Army orders for those operations. All I can truthfully say is that we did our utmost. We could not have done more. History must give its verdict. I do not for one moment contend that we did not make mistakes and many of them, and as I read through these old orders before me, I keep recalling the old problems with which we were faced.

CHAPTER IX

FURTHER DETAILS OF THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

AS I said before, I had not intended to go into much detail regarding the Battle of Messines and the same applies to Passchendaele. The latter, however, having recently become the subject of severe criticism, I am in the following chapter giving a summary of those operations, compiled partly with the help of the Official Historian and partly from memoranda issued by the Second Army Staff at the time. As regards the part played by the Second Army, therefore, these are the official records issued and approved by the Commander of the Second Army. No doubt similar records of the part played by the Fifth Army exist and these presumably will be at the service of the Official Historian when the official account of the Passchendaele operations is written.

The Official Battle Nomenclature divided the fighting in the Battles of Ypres 1917 (21st July-10th November) into eight phases:

(1) The Battle of Pilckem Ridge, 31st July-2nd August, with the subsequent "Capture of Westhoek," 10th August.

(2) The Battle of Langemarck, 16th-18th August.

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(3) The Battle of the Menin Road, 20th–25th September.

(4) The Battle of Polygon Wood, 26th September–3rd October.

(5) The Battle of Broodseinde, 4th October.

(6) The Battle of Poelcappelle, 9th October.

(7) The First Battle of Passchendaele, 12th October.

(8) The Second Battle of Passchendaele, 26th October–10th November.

The bombardment was begun on the 15th July and gradually intensified, whilst the Royal Flying Corps practically obtained command of the air.

The 25th July was fixed for the date of the first attack, but owing to weather conditions it was postponed to the 28th, and then, at the earnest request of General Anthoine, whose artillery had not produced sufficient effect, to the 31st. Feint attacks were previously made on the Lens and Lille fronts.

The assault took place at 3.50 a.m. on the 31st July. The first line, a thousand yards ahead, was gained with ease, and also the second another thousand yards on, except on the extreme right of the Fifth Army, from Westhoek southwards, where machine guns had escaped the bombardment. In spite of heavy rain setting in in the afternoon, the centre and left of the Fifth Army and the French reached the first objectives for the day without serious difficulty, and the Second Army gained a line abreast of the right of the Fifth.

Weather then rendered a general advance difficult, and there was only some local fighting in which, on the 10th August, the position near Westhoek was improved.

THE SECOND OFFENSIVE

Rain having ceased and the ground beginning to dry, it was decided to resume operations on the 16th August, and on the 15th two Canadian divisions made a diversion attack at Lens. Unfortunately, there was a heavy fall of rain on the night of the 15th/16th; however the whole of the objectives on the left, including the village of Langemarck from a point over 2,000 yards east of that village to the French left were won, but again on the right the gain of ground was slight.

Minor attacks to improve the line were made on the 22nd (by the three right corps of the Fifth Army) and the 27th, but very heavy rain set in again on the 27th, and operations were again stopped.

As the delays had enabled the enemy to concentrate his forces and bring up reserves, Sir D. Haig decided to wait and prepare another formal offensive, and he extended his front of attack on the right to include another 3,000 yards. The main share in the attack was now allotted to the Second Army, which took over the right corps sector of the Fifth, where the Australian Corps had replaced the II.

The second offensive (Battle of the Menin Road) by the Second and Fifth Armies took place on 20th September.

The ground had dried up considerably since the previous operations, but unfortunately rain fell heavily during the night 19th/20th September, which was followed by thick mist in the morning. The Second Army employed three Corps, IX, X and I Anzac. The Fifth Army two and a half Corps.

Only a short advance of some thousand yards was set down for this day for the Second Army and

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all objectives were taken although the enemy put up a stubborn defence in the neighbourhood of the Tower Hamlets.

We captured 44 officers and 1,564 other ranks by 6 p.m. 21st September in the Second Army. After the above attack the situation remained unchanged till the morning of 25th September. That day is one which I remember well. With our plans all complete for our offensive to take place early on 26th September, it was very disconcerting to be attacked ourselves on the 25th and it appeared at one time as if our plan for the 26th would not materialize.

At 6 a.m. on the 25th September, the enemy attacked in force our positions between Tower Hamlets and the Polygon Wood. The attacking troops penetrated our front and support lines in the Veldhoek trench north of the Menin Road, and for 500 yards south of the Polygon Wood. The support lines of the Veldhoek trench were re-captured by the Queens and Highland Light Infantry.

About 12 noon, a second heavy attack developed on the same front, which succeeded in driving in our line again in several places. The situation was, however, restored later during the afternoon by an attack carried out by troops of the Queens, Highland Light Infantry, Worcesters, Kings, Middlesex, Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, and Australians.

The 33rd Division, however, suffered heavy casualties during the fighting on the 25th September, which not only reduced their fighting strength for the attack next morning, but also interfered considerably with the preparations for attack.

AIR ACTIVITY

During the night 25th/26th September, the situation quietened down, which enabled our attacking troops to move forward to their assembly formations.

At 5.50 a.m., on the 26th September, the attack was launched on a frontage of 5,500 yards extending from the Bitter Wood opposite the southern extremity of the Tower Hamlets Spur to 500 yards north of Anzac. The Fifth Army continued the attack to the north. The X Corps on the right attacked with troops of the 39th Division. The I Anzac Corps attacked with the 5th and 4th Australian Divisions with complete success. The 4th Australian Division crossed the Upper Steenbeck Valley and gained both their objective lines south of Zonnebeke.

All day on the 26th our aeroplanes were very active ; contact patrols flew low over the enemy's positions from early morning onwards, searching for reserve troops, and harassing hostile troops and transport from an average height of about 300 feet. A considerable amount of artillery co-operation was carried out and several special reconnaissances made. Several tons of bombs had been dropped daily and nightly during recent operations on enemy dumps, railheads, assembly areas, and traffic routes. Hostile aircraft were very active on the 26th, both trying to hinder our own machines and also flying low over our lines. Five of these low-flying aeroplanes were shot down by our machine-gun fire. In air fighting on 26th three E.A. were shot down and two driven down out of control ; four of our machines were missing.

The number of prisoners passed through Corps cages for the forty-eight hours up to 6 p.m., 27th, was 31 officers and 849 other ranks. The total

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since 6 p.m., 19th instant, was 79 officers and 2,466 other ranks.

The following is an extract from a memorandum which I issued after the above operations which shows the importance the enemy attached to ground and observation :

“ In yesterday's operations the enemy appears to have put forth extraordinary efforts to stop our advance or to drive us back from positions gained. As the detailed information continues to come in it is apparent that he recognized this attack, coming as it did so closely after that of the 20th, as the most critical one in our general advance toward the remaining positions on the Gheluvelt-Zonnebeke Ridge which he has so desperately defended.

“ The Battle of Menin Road on the 20th disclosed the importance the enemy attached to the Tower Hamlets Ridge. Yesterday's battle (Polygon Wood) not only brought about a renewal of counter-attacks on Tower Hamlets but developed fierce and sustained resistance south of Polygon Wood and very determined efforts to counter-attack on a large scale between it and Zonnebeke.

“ The very heavy counter-attack which the enemy launched at night against Tower Hamlets Ridge was to be expected after his extensive preparations throughout the day. These were disclosed by the movements in the localities and roads south-east of Zandvoorde and by the very heavy concentration of artillery behind Tenbrielen. This warning and the general anticipation of an attack on this sector—based on his previous action—enabled annihilating fire to be brought against

DESPERATE RESISTANCE

his troops assembled and deploying and so disconcerted his attack that but few elements even got to close range. It is not to be expected that the enemy will abandon his efforts in this locality so long as he can deny us observation about Menin Road and Gheluvelt; his fears for Zandvoorde Ridge will continue to draw in a certain number of troops from the south, as has been the case in both operations.

"The desperate manner in which he has fought to retain the advantage he gained about the Reutelbeek, south of Polygon Wood, on the 25th, indicates the importance the enemy attaches to observation from the heads of the valley between Gheluvelt and Becelaere. The circumstances of his attack on our line here the day before our own attack (described above in this summary) indicate how much he was willing to pay for denying us this ground.

"There are indications that at least two of the divisions in the line, viz. 3rd Reserve Division and 50th Reserve Division, have had severe casualties and may be expected to be immediately relieved—the former has very low *moral*, having had numerous desertions, while one platoon surrendered in a body and a company refused to go forward. Of the reserve divisions, it may be considered that parts of two, the 17th and the one counter-attacking at Tower Hamlets, have had very severe losses, probably aggregating another division."

The 28th and 29th September passed relatively quietly. An interesting incident occurred on the 28th on the front of the 5th Australian Division, east of Polygon Wood, which well showed the

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

demoralizing effect of our tactics. A hostile party of some 200 of the 19th Reserve Division came into the line on the night of the 27th/28th. They were caught by our nightly artillery harassing fire, and then lost their way. Daylight found them wandering about close to the Australians, who opened on them with rifle and machine-gun fire. They suffered many casualties, and three Officers and 67 other ranks surrendered in batches during the course of the morning.

The long spell of fine weather broke on the evening of the 3rd October, when a heavy gale accompanied by light rain showers, broke in from the south-west. There was some intermittent hostile shell fire during the night of 3rd/4th, but on the whole the assembling of our troops was not seriously interfered with.

At 6 a.m., 4th October, the attack was launched on a frontage of about 9,700 yards, extending from Bitter Wood, south of the Tower Hamlets Spur, to north of Gravenstafel, where the front of the attack was prolonged by the Army on our left by a further 4,300 yards to the Ypres-Thourout Railway.

The IX Corps attacked on the right and the X Corps attacked on the right centre. Despite some hostile shelling of the forward area, the troops reached their assembly positions up to time. Considerable opposition was met with about Polderhoek Chateau and west of Reutel, but the objective was gained throughout the whole line, and the troops detailed for the assault on the further objective were able to reach their jumping-off positions up to time.

The I Anzac Corps attacked in the left centre with troops of the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions.

ASSAULT ON THE BLUE LINE

The enemy were met with in considerable strength, elements of three divisions being found formed up ready for an attack on our line which our assault anticipated only by ten minutes. Very severe casualties were inflicted on the enemy by our barrage and with the bayonet, and the enemy's opposition was quickly overcome. By 8.12 a.m. the whole of the Red Line was reported to be in our hands.

The II Anzac Corps attacked on the left with the 3rd Australian Division on the right and the New Zealand Division on the left. The New Zealand Division was intermittently shelled throughout the night, causing some casualties. The support line of the 3rd Australian Division was also intermittently shelled and at 5.30 a.m. the enemy opened a barrage on our front line. Nevertheless, our assault was launched punctually to time and by 9.14 a.m. both divisions had reported the capture of the whole of the Red Line, and many German prisoners were already being sent back.

After a halt of from one to two hours on the Red Line, the assault was launched on the Blue Line.

The X Corps attacked on the right, the I Anzac Corps attacked in the centre, and the II Anzac Corps attacked on the left with Australian and New Zealand troops.

The enemy offered a stubborn resistance, but by 12.20 p.m. the I Anzac Corps reported the capture of the whole of their final objective and the II Anzac Corps reported similarly at 1.15 p.m. The 7th Division, X Corps, reached practically the whole of their final objective and probably the 21st Division also, but the situation of the right

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

brigade of this division in Reutel was at all times somewhat obscure.

During the day the enemy delivered no less than ten counter-attacks.

Five counter-attacks were made against the right brigade of the 5th Division between the Menin Road and Polderhoek Chateau and two attacks against the left brigade of the 21st Division on the Judge Copse Spur north of Reutel. These attacks appear to have been successfully repulsed. A further attack, however, succeeded in dislodging us from Judge Copse, Reutel and Polderhoek Chateau, and at the end of the day our line ran along the western and northern edges of Polderhoek Chateau Wood, the eastern edge of Cameron Covert, on the western outskirts of Reutel, through J 11 central to the Broodseinde-Becelaere Road at point J 6 c 1.0.

Further north, a concentration of the enemy's infantry in D 30a during the afternoon was dispersed by our artillery.

At 2.35 p.m. the enemy made a determined attack in three waves from the direction of the Cemetery in D 17a, north of Ypres-Roulers Railway, but this attack was broken up by our artillery, rifle and machine-gun fire. A second attack was similarly dealt with, and a concentration in D 4b and D 5a, west of Passchendaele, about noon was broken up by our artillery before any counter-attack from this direction could materialize. Several S.O.S. signals were sent up at various points of the front at 7 p.m. and during the night of 4th/5th October, but the enemy made no further attacks and the consolidation of our line proceeded satisfactorily.

On the greater part of our front the enemy

SEVERE FIGHTING

offered a stubborn resistance and the large proportion of bayonet wounds among the German prisoners testifies to the severity of the hand-to-hand conflict which took place on many parts of the front, and in which our troops again proved their superiority. In places, however, the Germans surrendered freely, an Australian officer capturing 31 prisoners single-handed from one blockhouse, and the garrison of another blockhouse surrendered with three machine guns as soon as our attack was launched.

The enemy Order of Battle on the Second Army front of attack from north to south was as follows :

10th Ersatz Division, 20th Division, 4th Guard Division, One regiment of 45th Reserve Division, one or more battalions of 16th Division, 19th Reserve Division, 8th Division.

As a result of recent operations it is estimated that seven battalions of each of the 4th Guard and 19th Reserve Divisions ; six battalions each of the 13th Ersatz and 20th Divisions ; five battalions of the 45th Reserve Division ; four battalions of the 8th Division and three battalions of the 16th Division have all suffered so heavily as to be of little further fighting value. The thickening up of the line by the bringing in of battalions and regiments of other divisions, the confusion of units and the lack of cohesion in the counter-attacks proves how completely our former attacks have disorganized the enemy and with what haste he has been compelled to throw in his reinforcements. The enemy situation has not been improved by the severe losses which he incurred on 4th October.

In spite of very unfavourable weather on the day of attack, our aeroplanes succeeded in carrying out several contact patrols and flash reconnais-

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

sances and in attacking enemy troops and transport with machine-gun fire. One enemy aircraft was brought down by Lewis-gun fire on the I Anzac Corps front.

Seven field guns, several trench mortars and a large number of machine guns have been captured.

The total number of prisoners who passed through Corps Cages and Casualty Clearing Stations from 6 p.m., 3rd October, to 6 p.m., 6th October, was 114 officers and 4,044 other ranks.

A study of the map will show my readers the immense importance of the possession of the Broodseinde Ridge which brought us within 1½ miles of Passchendaele and the high ground to the north of it.

The front of attack by the Second and Fifth Armies (Second Army Corps, Fifth Army Corps) measured some 10,000 yards. An attack prepared under great difficulties and at short notice and carried out with complete success by those gallant British and Dominion troops.

Dr. Bean, the Australian Official Historian, puts it:

“An overwhelming blow had been struck, and both sides knew it. The objective was the most important yet attacked by the Second and Fifth Armies, and they had again done almost exactly what they pleased to do. . . . This was the third blow struck at Ypres in fifteen days with complete success. It drove the Germans from one of the most important positions on the Western Front. Notwithstanding their full knowledge that it was coming, they were completely powerless to withstand it.”

THE BATTLE OF BROODSEINDE

Another writer says: "Who has ever heard of Broodseinde? (Try it on your friends.)"

Is that quite fair either to the memory of the gallant men who lie below those little white crosses in that hallowed ground or to their relatives throughout our great Empire? I wonder.

The Battle of Broodseinde on 4th October appears to have inflicted such heavy losses on the enemy and to have so disorganized his artillery that the succeeding days passed uneventfully.

Amongst many valuable documents and maps captured during the Battle of Broodseinde there fell into our hands a Brigade Order of the 5th Guards Infantry Brigade, showing that the enemy realized that the policy of counter-attack which they had practised throughout the whole of the operations at Ypres this year have been not only fruitless but costly. It was not proposed to hold the front line in much greater strength, not less than half the regiment being in the front line. From subsequent events it was found that this order came from the Higher Command and was already being put into effect.

The assembling of our troops during the night 8th/9th October was attended with considerable difficulty. The ground was very heavy owing to heavy rain having fallen intermittently since the afternoon of the 4th October, and the night up till 11 p.m. was exceptionally dark. No interference, however, was encountered from hostile artillery fire, and at 5.23 a.m. on the 9th October our attack was successfully launched.

The X Corps undertook a subsidiary operation on the right to improve the line we had gained on the 4th instant. The I Anzac Corps formed the right flank of the main attack and employed

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

troops of the 2nd Australian Division, troops of the Fifth Army attacking on their left.

The enemy's artillery shelled the front areas of our two northern Corps somewhat heavily at intervals during the night 11th/12th October, using a large number of gas shells on the area astride the Ypres-Roulers Railway and on Westhoek Ridge. This, together with the muddy ground and very wet, dark night, made the assembling of our troops a matter of considerable difficulty. All our troops, however, reached their jumping-off positions up to time, and at 5.25 a.m., 12th October the I and II Anzac Corps, consisting entirely of Australian and New Zealand troops, advanced to the assault. Hostile machine guns immediately opened heavy fire, and it was found that new apron wire had been erected round several of the enemy's strong points and "pill boxes." Our troops progressed satisfactorily up several of the spurs, but a strong point about Bellevue succeeded in checking our advance at this spot. The valleys proved impassable after the heavy rain owing to the mud, which also delayed and tired out our troops in their further progress on the higher slopes. Eventually our advance was brought to a standstill, and a line was consolidated slightly in advance of that from which the attack started.

The above was part of an attack launched by all three Armies, 2nd and 5th British and the French (General Anthoine) on a 13,500-yards front. In places the first objective was reached, but at the end of the day, though the left of the Fifth Army and the French made good progress, the right of the front line rested between the old line and the first objective.

After the operations of the 12th October had

GHELUVELT AND POLDERHOEK

ceased there was no further change in the situation until the morning of the 26th. Close touch was maintained with the enemy everywhere except on part of the front of the I Anzac Corps, where the Germans have evacuated some low-lying ground south of the Ypres-Roulers Railway.

Every effort was made to organize the captured battle ground for further offensive operations.

Our troops having been successfully assembled without serious interference by the enemy an attack was launched at 5.40 a.m. on the fronts of the X and Canadian Corps.

Very heavy fighting took place during which our troops succeeded in capturing Gheluvelt village and Polderhoek Spur but were unable to hold on to either owing to the enemy powerful counter-attacks.

The weather conditions and the state of the ground had a very great influence on the day's operations.

Two features, apart from exhaustion and the difficulties of movement, seem outstanding :

(i) The mud, in a semi-liquid state and splashed up by shell bursts, got into everything, and was especially troublesome for rifles and machine guns.

(ii) The very soft nature of the ground apparently affected the detonation of percussion shells to such an extent that prisoners have on several occasions remarked on the harmlessness of the bursts, or the failure to detonate.

On the 27th October it was found that the enemy was holding Decline Copse. He was, however, successfully ejected on the night 27th/28th October and the Wood remained in our hands.

On the 28th and 29th October there was no change in the situation. The enemy's artillery

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

concentrated heavily on our forward system in reply to our preparatory barrages on the mornings of the 27th and 28th October. During the night 29th/30th October, the situation was comparatively quiet.

Until about 11 a.m. on the 30th October the weather was fine, but it was very cold and a high wind was blowing. The assembly of the Canadians was successfully completed before dawn.

At about 2.43 a.m. the 1st Australian Division established a post in Decoy Wood, in order to cover the right flank of the attack.

At 5.53 a.m. an attack was launched by the Canadian Corps against the slopes to the west and south-west of Passchendaele. This, in conjunction with an attack by the XVIII Corps of the Fifth Army on their left.

The Order of Battle right to left was: 1st Australian Division, 4th Canadian Division, 3rd Canadian Division, and the 63rd Division of the Fifth Army.

During the course of the day the 3rd Canadian Division was counter-attacked no less than five times from the north of Passchendaele. All these attacks were successfully repulsed.

Again, the factor which chiefly affected the situation during the battle was the condition of the ground.

Although at the time of the attack and for some hours after the weather was fair, the rain in the afternoon seriously interfered with consolidation and supply. While these conditions were doubtless of advantage to the enemy in his defence, they may have affected his operations in counter-attack, especially in the afternoon and evening.

In general, the enemy has appeared consider-

EXTRAORDINARY STATEMENTS

ably disorganized in connection with this operation. There is no doubt that some of his troops ran away early in the morning in one sector north of Passchendaele and that only a vigorous counter-attack by fresh troops from support re-established conditions. This may be the origin of the enemy's extraordinary statements in his wireless *communiqué* on the evening of the 30th, in which he said that we had captured Passchendaele and that they had recaptured it in an "impetuous attack. . . ."

On the 6th November further attacks were made by the Canadian and X Corps by which a little further ground was gained.

There was no change in the situation on the 7th, 8th and 9th November. These three days passed comparatively quietly on the battle front and there was a noticeable decrease in hostile artillery activity south of Sanctuary Wood.

This was probably owing to the fact that the enemy was moving guns northwards to the West-roosebeke area.

At 6.5 a.m. on the morning of the 13th November an attack was launched north of Passchendaele by the II and Canadian Corps. The order of battle from Right to Left was as follows :

2nd Canadian Division.

1st Canadian Division.

1st Division.

Each Division was on a one-Brigade front.

The attack progressed favourably and all objectives were obtained at an early hour, comparatively slight opposition being encountered.

Thus ended what may be called the Passchendaele operations with Passchendaele in our hands and a substantial footing on the Passchendaele-

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

Staden Ridge. Critics will say and have said "Yes, and at what a price?"

I cannot dispute that. Those stages up to Passchendaele have always been a nightmare to me as they were to my Chief. They were all right up to and including Broodseinde, 4th October. After that Fate was very cruel to us. It is easy to say now that everyone knew it was going to rain like that except those at G.H.Q. and that the whole operation was an "unjustifiable gamble." I do not know how any operation of war can be anything else but a gamble unless the enemy tells you what he has got the other side of the hill and in what state his troops are.

According to the German official monograph, *Flandern 1917*, no less than eighty-six German divisions twenty-two of them twice, had been thrown into the battle. There had been no change in the German strength on the Western Front during August, but from the beginning of September onwards there was a constant flow of reinforcements from the Eastern to the Western theatre. To quote the monograph :

"Divisions disappeared by dozens into the turmoil of the battle, only to emerge from the witches' cauldron after a short period thinned and exhausted, often reduced to a miserable remnant. . . . Significant signs of strain manifested themselves."

On the 11th October Crown Prince Rupprecht recorded in his diary :

"Most perturbing is the fact that our troops are steadily deteriorating."

GENERAL VON KUHL'S ACCOUNT

General von Kuhl, Crown Prince Rupprecht's Chief of the Staff, in his account of Passchendaele in his *Weltkrieg*, states that the field recruit depots were completely emptied, and that by the 1st November the average strength of battalions on the whole Western front was down to about 640 men :

“ Except for the Class 1899, of 18-year old men, there were available to replace losses only recovered wounded and men who could be withdrawn from the Eastern front,”

so that finally the recruit situation

“ decisively influenced the conduct of the war.”

The above at any rate shows that he was not too happy. I was, at that time, too junior to know anything about Cabinet plans and the situation in other theatres of war. I never served at G.H.Q. I had only one task and that was to help my Chief to capture Passchendaele. I presume the Commander-in-Chief had to take into consideration the state of the French Army at the time, the Italian disaster at Caporetto, the forthcoming Cambrai operations, the state of affairs on the Russian front and all factors which made it imperative that the Germans should not be at liberty to remove troops from Flanders.

I am quite unaware whether Sir Douglas Haig after Broodseinde ever considered the abandonment of further operations. I certainly never heard either him or the Army Commanders ever mention such an idea.

I venture to think that if we had not been “ killed by mud ” we should have taken the Passchendaele-Staden Ridge with proper preparations and if we had done so there would have been

THE PASSCHENDAELE OPERATIONS

no 21st March, 1918 disaster, and no 8th April attack on us in Flanders. With that high ground in our possession as a jumping-off place for the spring of 1918, I am convinced that the enemy would not have had troops to spare for many other theatres.

CHAPTER X

TO ITALY

PASSCHENDAELE was soon to have a sequel. It had been a terribly hard time for all. No words can ever express what those gallant troops had gone through in order to get it. Anyhow it was ours and the objective had been gained after very great losses. Our object then was to hold it and to try and improve the awful conditions behind the lines and to prepare for the winter.

How well I remember one evening when an aide-de-camp, Captain Butler came in to my room to tell me that the Chief wished to see me at once.

I went up to his room where he was sitting with a telegram before him. He just looked up and said: "You and I have got the sack. We are to hand over to General Rawlinson at once."

I confess that I was staggered at what seemed a grave injustice to my Chief. Then he added: "We are to go to Italy at once."

No doubt the telegram had been a great shock to him, so with his keen sense of humour he thought he would just play it off on me.

It is interesting to quote from letters from my Chief to his wife at this period. On 31st October he writes:

"I have not read Lloyd George's speech and

TO ITALY

shall not now. I should not worry about that. It really does not matter in the least."

On 6th November he writes :

"I sent you a wire this afternoon to say we had a good day. It was only a small one as we had not many troops engaged but we got Passchendaele which we have been working up to for some time and that in itself is a good thing."

On 7th November he writes :

"I have just received a great shock. I have been ordered to go to Italy to assume command of the British Force there. I am very sick about it and do not want to go in the least."

The next day he writes :

"The more I think of it (the Command in Italy) I am afraid the less I like it. We leave for Paris on Saturday morning and go off to Italy on Sunday. I simply loathe leaving the Second Army and feel very depressed."

On the 9th he writes :

"I have had rather a trying day, mostly saying good-bye. I saw the Canadian Divisional Generals and Currie early this morning and then went on to G.H.Q. where I saw D. H. I must say he was very nice. No one could have been nicer. He recommended one of the others to go."

The above hardly agrees with the statement which appeared recently that he was so glad to get away from Flanders.

The next few days were spent in handing over and in preparing a Staff for Italy.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S INSISTENCE

Incidentally, we had both hopes to get a few days' leave after Passchendaele had been captured.

Our journey to Italy was eventful. On the way a message arrived saying that Mr. Lloyd George wished to see the Chief at the Hôtel Meurice in Paris.

I attended that meeting. Sir Maurice Hankey was also present. Monsieur Painlevé attended. Mr. Lloyd George was very insistent on the necessity of restoring the Italian Front and was only too anxious to take as many troops from the Western front as my Chief could wish.

We then went on to Padua, where the Chief took over Command from Lord Cavan, and we met Sir Henry Wilson, Marshal Foch, General Weygand and General Diaz, the Italian Commander-in-Chief.

I remember an amusing incident *en route*. We stopped at some station—I think Mantua—where we had arranged to have dinner in the station restaurant. As our train pulled up we saw the station was all decorated with flags and the platform absolutely packed with people. We thought it was in honour of our Chief who hurriedly got ready to receive a deputation of welcome. As nothing happened, we found on inquiry that this immense demonstration was to honour the first Italian soldiers who were returning to the Front after being wounded and that it had nothing whatever to do with us. We, with difficulty, made our way through the crowd to the restaurant.

We detrained at Padua.

Lord Cavan and his Staff, which included the Prince of Wales and General Gathorne Hardy, were there, but, I think, only one battalion of the

TO ITALY

23rd Division had arrived. Five divisions were *en route*.

Padua was in a state of turmoil. The streets were full. All the servants had fled from the principal hotel. The Second Italian Army was in retreat from Caporetto. We passed thousands of them marching back in quite an orderly manner.

During this time we had many conferences with General Diaz and his Chief of Staff—General Guardino—and we learnt a good deal of the situation from our Military Attaché, General Delmé Radcliffe. We also had several conferences with Marshal Foch and General Weygand, and Sir Henry Wilson.

As far as I can recollect, it was decided that the Italian troops were to stand on a certain line and that the British troops should be put in to strengthen it.

I remember carrying out a reconnaissance in a Lancia car which had been lent to us previous to the arrival of our own cars. The Italian driver was certainly the most dangerous I have ever known. I recollect, very vividly, coming down the side of a precipice with the car apparently out of control. I could see one small heap of stones and mercifully the car hit them and this steadied us. I was unable to talk Italian to the driver but I think he was able to understand something of the language which I did use.

All seemed so peaceful after the Ypres Salient. The British troops were put into the Montello Sector. It was possible to ride and in some cases motor into the front line—a pleasant change from Flanders. As a matter of fact, although peaceful in the front line, it turned out to be far from peaceful in the rear. The French and British

FATE

Headquarters had been established in Padua and we were very comfortable until the Austrian Air Force discovered our whereabouts. We had no air defences and we were at the mercy of the enemy bombers who followed the line of the Canal, and gave us a bad time. The houses had no cellars and it was impossible to get any cover. The enemy bombers came over every half-hour. We were eventually forced to move our Headquarters to a place some six miles outside Padua, but not before an unfortunate incident had occurred. We had a large mess for the members of the Army Headquarter Mess quite close to our offices. One night I had a terribly heavy cold and the Army Commander flatly refused to allow me to go back to my office after dinner, as I always did. That very evening about 9.30 p.m. a heavy attack was made. Several bombs just missed the Army Mess, one killed a sentry on our Headquarters and wounded a clerk of mine. All my office was destroyed. Such is fate. In an earlier chapter I described how my Divisional Commander, having a cold, sent me to the Canadian Corps as Brigadier-General, General Staff instead of to the 12th Corps in Salonika and in this instance a cold of my own saved me.

There is little to relate of our time in Italy except to say that we established the most friendly relations with General Diaz and his Staff and with the Duke D'Aosta and other Corps Commanders.

A certain number of letters have appeared in the Press from time to time detracting from the services of the Italian troops and representing that the retreat from Caporetto was only stopped by the French and British troops almost at the point

TO ITALY

of the bayonet. That is totally untrue and I am fortunate in having in my possession a copy of a report rendered by General Sir Herbert Plumer in March, 1918, just before handing over to Lord Cavan on our return to Flanders.

In this General Plumer states that the instructions which he received on proceeding to Italy were :

- (a) To take command of the British Force then in transit to Italy ;
- (b) to report on the general situation and the number of troops required for the task before us.

He found on arrival that the general situation was certainly disquieting. The Italian Army had just received a very severe blow from which it was bound to require time to recover and reorganize, and although every effort was being made to dispatch the French and British forces to the theatre of operations, it was obvious, owing to the limited railway facilities, that some time must elapse before these forces could be regarded as a material factor.

Reconnaissances were made at once to arrange for their employment according to the number available and the development of the situation.

The Italian retreat had been arrested on the River Piavè, but it was uncertain whether they would hold this line and in the first instance it was arranged that in conjunction with the French two of our divisions should move forward on arrival to the hills north and south of Vicenza, where a stand could certainly have been made.

The forward march was well carried out. The marches were necessarily long as time was, or might have been, all important. The troops

THE MONTELLO SECTOR

everywhere met with an enthusiastic reception from the inhabitants.

By the time we had reached the above position the general situation had improved and we accordingly made an offer in conjunction with the French to take over sectors in the foothills of the Asiago plateau, which would have placed us in a strategically sound position to withstand attack either from the north or north-east. At this stage, however, snow was imminent and it was considered by the Italian High Command that our troops would suffer considerable losses and hardships from the cold in the hills, especially as they were unaccustomed to such warfare and there were many difficulties in providing the special mountain equipment necessary, and it was suggested that we should instead take over the Montello Sector with the French on our left, to which we agreed.

The Montello Sector was a feature by itself and an important one. It acted as a hinge to the whole Italian line, joining as it did that portion facing north from Mount Tomba to Lake Garda with the defensive line of the River Piave covering Venice, which was held by the Third Italian Army.

There is no doubt but that the entry of French and British troops into the line at this time had an excellent moral effect and it enabled the Italians to withdraw troops to train and reorganize.

There were at this time several German divisions east of the River Piave and it was quite likely that an attack to force the river and capture Venice was in contemplation. We took over the line on 4th December and at once got to work to organize the defences in depth, keeping as large

TO ITALY

a Reserve as was possible in hand in case of unforeseen eventualities occurring in other portions of the line. Such did occur as the enemy commenced to develop local attacks on the Grappa and Asiago Sectors, first in one and then in the other, assisted undoubtedly by German batteries. These attacks fell principally on the first and fourth Italian Armies, who fought well and though they had a good number of casualties themselves they inflicted heavy losses on the enemy.

December was an anxious month. Local attacks grew more frequent and more severe and, though the progress made was not great and Italian counter-attacks were constantly made, yet the danger of a break through into the plains undoubtedly increased.

The general impression conveyed by these attacks was that the Austrians were being encouraged to persevere with their attacks in the hope of getting down into the plains for the winter and that the German divisions were being kept in Reserve with the intention of concentrating them at short notice to force home an attack should opportunity offer.

As a precautionary measure to meet this possibility it was arranged to form two groups, one to the east and one to the west of the River Brenta, each group composed of British, French and Italian troops. The object of these groups was not only to stop any enemy advance into the plains but to drive him back disorganized into the mountains where his losses would undoubtedly have been very severe.

Rear lines of defence were constructed under our supervision and as time passed and preparations became more forward the general atmosphere

ACROSS THE PIAVE

of security improved. This was increased by the attempt of the Italians to recapture Mount Asolone on 22nd December which resulted in the southern slopes being again in Italian hands. The following day, however, the pendulum again swung to the Asiago as the enemy captured Mount Melago and Col Rosso. The Italians re-took the former by counter-attack. Christmas Day found us, therefore, with the situation both on the Grappa and Asiago serious, the latter the more so, but the Italians, though suffering from prolonged strain and cold, were offering a stubborn resistance.

From this time the situation gradually improved. The French carried out a brilliant attack on 30th December in the Mount Tomba Sector, resulting in the capture of over 1,500 Austrian prisoners. British artillery assisted in this operation.

During all this period we had carried out continuous patrol work across the River Piave and much successful counter-battery work. The Piave was a very serious obstacle especially at that season of the year, the breadth opposite the British front being considerably over 1,000 yards and the current 14 knots. Every form of raft and boat had been used, but wading had proved the most successful, though the icy cold water made the difficulties even greater. In spite of this there was never any lack of volunteers both officers and men for these enterprises.

On 1st January our biggest raid was carried out by the Middlesex Regiment belonging to 41st Division. This was a most difficult and well-planned operation, which had for its objective the capture and surrounding of several buildings held by the enemy to a depth of 2,000 yards inland, provided a surprise could be effected. Two

TO ITALY

hundred and fifty men were passed across by wading and some prisoners were captured, but unfortunately the alarm was given by a party of fifty of the enemy that was encountered in an advanced post and the progress inland had, therefore, in accordance with orders, to be curtailed. The re-crossing of the river was successfully effected and our casualties were very few. An operation of this nature requires much forethought and arranging, even to wrapping every man in hot blankets immediately on emerging from the icy water.

The Third Italian Army also opened the year well by clearing the Austrians from the west bank of the Piave about Zenson. This was followed on 14th January by the attack of the Fourth Italian Army on Mount Asolone which, although not entirely successful, resulted in capturing over 400 Austrian prisoners.

The situation had by this time so far improved that it was no longer necessary to keep the two precautionary groups, referred to above, in being, and Lord Plumer offered to take over another sector of defence on his right in order to assist the Italians. This was agreed to and was completed by 28th January. On this day and the following the First Italian Army carried out successful operations on the Col del Rosso—Mount Val Bella front on the Asiago plateau. The infantry attacked with great spirit and captured some 2,500 Austrian prisoners. British artillery took part in the above operation.

After the beginning of February the weather became bad, a considerable amount of snow fell, and visibility was poor, which interfered considerably with air and artillery work.

BRILLIANT WORK BY THE R.F.C.

It was certainly the case that the general situation on the Italian front had gradually but steadily improved during the four months which had elapsed since the British force was sent there and although we had not taken part in any serious fighting I think we can fairly claim to have had some share in this improvement.

The work of the R.F.C. under Wing.-Commander Webb-Bowen during the period under review was quite brilliant. From the moment of arrival they made their presence felt and very soon overcame the difficulties of the mountains. They took part in all operations and rendered much assistance to the Italians in the air. They carried out a large number of successful raids on enemy aerodromes, railway junctions, etc., and during the period destroyed sixty-four hostile machines, a large proportion of which were German, and nine balloons, our losses to the enemy during the period being twelve machines and three balloons, a record which speaks for itself.

The artillery also rendered very useful service. Our gunners soon became accustomed to the altered conditions and carried out many successful destructive shoots. A comparison of the photographs of hostile battery positions when our artillery entered the line with the positions now occupied shows that the enemy batteries had been successfully forced back almost throughout the whole front. Some British artillery assisted both in French and Italian operations and a frequent interchange of British and Italian batteries was made, together with Counter-Battery Staff Officers in order that experience of each other's methods might be gained. Every effort was made to illustrate the value of counter-battery

TO ITALY

work, the value of which we had learned by experience in France but which the Italians had not hitherto fully appreciated.

The Italians were only too anxious to profit by any experience we could give them and this was done not only by frequent interchange of visits of Commanders and Staffs to the various sectors of defence but by the establishment of Schools of Instruction at which a large number of Italian officers actually underwent the courses. About 100 Italian officers attended the courses at the various schools, together with some French officers. Similarly, British officers underwent courses at French and Italian schools.

The health of the troops had been very good and the casualties slight. The men felt the cold considerably during the winter, but Lord Plumer was convinced that they had benefited much from the change after the severe fighting they had had in France.

The conduct of the troops was excellent. They were very well received everywhere and they themselves set the high standard expected of them.

General Plumer stated in his report that he could not speak too highly of the kindness we received from the Italian authorities, with whom we established most cordial relations. Everything possible was done to help us. The provision, employment and maintenance of the Force entailed a considerable amount of work between the Allied Staffs and this was conducted throughout in complete harmony.

All the above is taken from an official dispatch rendered by General Plumer on leaving Italy.

During our time in Italy, Lady Plumer came

BACK TO THE WESTERN FRONT

out and they spent a happy ten days at Lady Carnarvon's villa at Porto Fino.

During this time they visited all the hospitals at Genoa and in the neighbourhood. He received orders to return to the Western Front to resume command of the Second Army. After ten or eleven wonderful days they went by train to Rome for him to see the Italian Secretary of State for War and the Ambassador, Sir Rennell Rodd, with whom they dined on the night of their arrival, and who arranged for them to see Queen Elena at the Quirinal and the Queen-Mother at her beautiful Palace. He then returned to his Headquarters to hand over his Command to Lord Cavan and to bid farewell to a great many people. Some of his Staff were on leave so they joined him on the Western Front. He and I travelled in a most comfortable coach provided by the Italian Government and met his wife at Turin, where she had just arrived from Rome.

CHAPTER XI

RETURN TO THE YPRES SALIENT. THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME.

EARLY in March, 1918, however, we were ordered back to Flanders—to our old Headquarters at Cassel and we were quite glad to go back to our old haunts.

I may say that it was during our four months in Italy that the offer of Chief of the Imperial General Staff on certain well-defined conditions was made to Sir Herbert Plumer by Lord Derby. He was to replace Sir William Robertson, who was then Chief of the Imperial General Staff. It was at the time when the Committee at Versailles under the late Lord Rawlinson was in existence and with which Sir William Robertson was never in agreement.

The conditions to be imposed on Sir Herbert Plumer did not give him a free hand over this Committee and he would not accept the appointment on such conditions. Sir Henry Wilson was appointed shortly afterwards.

We returned to Cassel on 13th March, 1918, the Army Commander's birthday, and on the 21st March the storm broke on the Third and Fifth Armies. The reaction of which fell on the Second Army in April, as I will show later.

Shortly after our return to Cassel, the Army Commander received the following letter from the

THE ENEMY BREAKS THROUGH

Commander-in-Chief showing how glad the latter was to have him back.

“GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,

“British Armies in France.

“18th March, 1918.

“MY DEAR PLUMER,

“I am giving this note to Cox, (now head of the Intelligence Branch), to introduce him to you. He is very level-headed and full of sense, so I hope you will have a good talk with him regarding the general situation of the enemy on this front.

“I hope you are getting settled comfortably at Cassel. It is a great satisfaction to me to have you again at the head of an Army here. I shall come and see you some day soon, meantime

“Believe me,

“Yours very truly,

“D. HAIG.”

It is outside the scope of this book to go into the detail of the fighting with which the Second Army was not concerned, except to relate an incident at which I was present and which is engraved on my memory for ever.

On the afternoon of that fateful day, 21st March, 1918, my Chief was sent for by the Commander-in-Chief, and I accompanied him. We were shown into Sir Douglas Haig's study where he was seated at a table. He seemed quite unmoved and after greeting us warmly he took us over to a big map in his room and explained to us the latest situation. It was unpleasant hearing. The enemy had broken through in many places and were heading for Amiens.

HE RETURNS TO THE YPRES SALIENT

How well I remember the Commander-in-Chief's words, "What can you do to help?"

I may mention that we then had fourteen divisions in the Second Army, all in good condition. This was the number we had taken over on our return from Italy the previous week. We still held Passchendaele. The Messines-Wytschaete Ridge was held by three Australian divisions.

I am the only living witness of this scene.

The older man (Plumer) with his hand on the younger man's (Haig's) shoulder just ready to give the maximum and more to help his Chief. His answer, "I will give you twelve divisions in return for tired ones."

To me it appeared impossible.

The Commander-in-Chief was obviously moved by it and said, "That means giving up Passchendaele."

"Not a bit of it," replied my Chief without a moment's hesitation.

I can see the look of gratitude in Sir Douglas Haig's eyes as he saw us off in the car to return to Cassel.

The next few days were busy ones in sending those twelve divisions down south and receiving very tired divisions in their place.

Within a few days the Messines-Wyschaete Ridge was held by three weak brigades in place of three fresh Australian divisions.

With the help of the reinforcements which were hurried both by the French and British, to the rescue, the situation in the south was stabilized.

It was during those days that the famous Doullens Conference was held.

Lord Milner and Sir Henry Wilson arrived and all the French officials. The Army Commanders

MARSHAL FOCH GENERALISSIMO

and Staffs were received and after a preliminary conference the Army Commanders and Staffs were sent to sit in an adjoining room.

We sat and waited for hours.

I remember a wise remark of my old Chief during those hours. "Byng and Gough ought to be with their Armies instead of sitting here wasting time. It doesn't matter for you and me, as we are not engaged."

It was during those hours that Marshal Foch was made Generalissimo and it was agreed that whatever happened the British would stand at Bray, at which place the French and British flanks would be joined.

By the time Byng rejoined his Army after those wasted hours, the situation had changed and the British division holding Bray had already retired.

The situation again became difficult.

The Commander of that division was removed. I think he had bad luck in being made a scapegoat.

Anyhow, the enemy was held up before Amiens and never again advanced in that theatre.

Early in April we had information of a possible enemy attack in the north. It was not thought that a major attack was contemplated but one that the enemy hoped would prevent further reinforcements being sent south.

Little did I imagine what was before me in the last month of my tenure as M.G.G.S. of the Second Army. I had just been appointed Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff to Sir Henry Wilson, but in view of the situation which developed I was allowed to remain with my Chief till the 8th May.

The following is a summary of that eventful month :

HE RETURNS TO THE YPRES SALIENT

1. On the 8th April it had been decided that the Second Army should take over the front of the XV Corps as far south as the vicinity of Laventie in order to assist the First Army, which had extended its front to the south. It had also been agreed that the 50th Division in XI Corps should relieve the Portuguese troops which had been in the line for some considerable time.

The enemy, however, anticipated this movement and attacked the XI and XV Corps on the morning of 9th April, making considerable progress.

The taking over of XV Corps front by the Second Army was consequently postponed.

2. The situation of the Second Army at this time was as follows :

During the fighting on Third and Fifth Army fronts, which commenced on 21st March, it had been necessary to draw on Second Army for fresh troops, and of the 14 divisions in the Second Army on 21st March, all had been transferred to the south, with the exception of 29th and 49th, which were both under orders to go.

These divisions had been replaced by others from the south, which had all been heavily engaged and had since been filled up with reinforcements, and officers and N.C.O.'s who had only lately arrived in this country.

There had, however, been no indications whatever of attack on the Second Army front and the whole front, including the Passchendaele salient, was held intact.

3. As the attack on XI and XV Corps fronts on 9th April grew more serious, assistance was sent to XV Corps as under :

Two Brigades of 29th Division to Merville area by bus.

THE SECOND ARMY'S SITUATION

One Brigade of 25th Division to Steenwerck by road.

One Brigade of 49th Division to La Crèche by bus.

4. The enemy succeeded in crossing the River Lys at Bac St. Maur and Saily and by spreading north and south was soon able to increase the advantage gained, which seriously threatened Erquinghem and Armentières.

It was hoped that the Brigade of 25th Division which arrived at Croix du Bac about 6 p.m. would be able to drive back any of the enemy that had crossed at Bac St. Maur, but they were unable to do this before dark.

5. On the following morning, 10th April, the attack spread to the right of the Second Army and after a heavy bombardment of the 19th and 25th Division fronts of IX Corps, the enemy succeeded in breaking through our line and advanced troops reached Messines about 8.30 a.m.

Counter-attacks were delivered at once, which regained the western edge.

Meanwhile the enemy made progress towards Ploegsteert village.

All available reserves were moved to reinforce IX Corps, viz. :

One Brigade of 49th Division to Neuve Eglise.

One Brigade of 29th Division to west of Ravensberg.

One Brigade of 36th Division to north-west of Neuve Eglise.

Instructions were received from G.H.Q. that 33rd Division would arrive from Fourth Army on night 10th/11th April, and 1st Australian Division would join XV Corps on 12th April.

6. The attack became general, and by the after-

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

noon of 13th April it was evident that the enemy held Messines and that a gap existed between Messines and Wytschaete and between Ploegsteert and the Nieppe-Armentières Road.

It was also evident that the enemy had made considerable progress towards Steenwerck and that he was also attacking the Damstrasse.

Severe fighting was also going on in Estaires.

7. During the night 10th/11th April, the 9th Division established a firm hold on Wytschaete and the gaps mentioned above were filled by IX Corps.

About noon on 11th April the enemy began to threaten Neuve Eglise. We were at this time still holding Hill 63, and at 4 p.m. a heavy attack was launched against 19th Division about Messines.

The 9th Division reported that the attack at Hollebeke had been repulsed.

By this time the 25th and 34th Divisions had had to withdraw from Le Bizet towards Nieppe, the enemy having pressed his attack north of Steenwerck.

Estaires had also fallen.

8. In order to economize troops, consequent on the above, it became necessary to withdraw the IX Corps on night 11th/12th April to the general line Steenwerck Station-Pont d'Achelles-Neuve Eglise-Wulverghem-Wytschaete, and to withdraw XXII, VIII and II Corps to their "battle zones," leaving outposts in advance.

This was accomplished successfully.

9. On 12th April the enemy pressed his attack against XV Corps, breaking through at Nerville and west of that place, and driving back 29th and 31st Divisions between Neuf Berquin and Merris.

This left a gap exposing Bailleul.

ATTACKS ON NEUVE EGLISE

The XV Corps was taken over by Second Army at 12 noon on 12th April. The situation at this time was serious, as the 1st Australian Division was not due to begin detraining at Hazebrouck till the late afternoon.

By night the 33rd Division had filled the gaps and the 1st Australian Division was commencing to arrive to defend Strazeele, Borre and Pradelles.

10. 13th April was a heavy day, during which repeated attacks on 4th Guards Brigade and 33rd Division were repulsed before 4th Guards Brigade were forced back to the edge of Bois D'Aval.

Four attacks on 33rd Division south of Meteren were repulsed.

Attacks on Wulverghem were also repulsed and at 11 a.m. we lost Neuve Eglise, but regained it after heavy fighting.

11. During the night 13th/14th April, the 1st Australian Division relieved the 29th and 31st Divisions.

Repeated attacks were made on Neuve Eglise, which was cleared by the Glasgow Highlanders of 33rd Division.

The 33rd Division south of Meteren was also attacked during the forenoon of 14th and held firm.

Several more attacks were made on the Army front during the day, the most serious being against the 33rd Division south of Meteren where the enemy succeeded in penetrating outlines, but was successfully driven back by 1st Middlesex and New Zealand Entrenching Battalion.

By the evening of 14th two French Divisions (28th and 133rd) and three French Cavalry Divisions were concentrating on the general line Cæstre-Poperinghe.

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

12. Except for heavy shelling on parts of the Army front the 15th April was comparatively quiet up till 5 p.m., when the enemy launched a heavy attack by three divisions, including the Alpine Corps, and succeeded in capturing Bailleul and the Ravelsberg Ridge.

13. By 10 a.m. on 16th April the II Corps had withdrawn successfully to the Pilckem Ridge-White Chateau line and XXII Corps to Voormezele line, with outposts in front.

Several enemy attacks were made on this day but were all repulsed.

The 28th and 133rd French Divisions were to have launched a counter-attack in conjunction with the British 9th Division at 6 p.m., but this did not materialize owing to there being insufficient time to get the troops into position.

14. On 17th April the 7th Seaforth Highlanders recaptured Wytschaete.

Other attacks made on the 19th, 33rd, 34th and 1st Australian Divisions were all repulsed.

On 18th April the Belgians completed the relief of 30th Division on the extreme north of the Second Army.

28th French Division took over responsibility for Kemmel Hill. On this date several attacks were made on 19th Division north of Kemmel, but were all repulsed.

15. During the next few days only local actions took place, and during this time the 28th, 154th, 34th and 133rd French Divisions entered the line, the two former comprising the II French Cavalry Corps and the latter the XXXVI Corps, the command of the whole sector passing to General de Mitry from IX Corps.

This sector included the defences of Kemmel,

CAPTURE OF KEMMEL

Mont Rouge, Mont Moir, Mont Vidaigne and Mont des Cats.

The XV Corps, 1st Australian Division, also extended its front to north-east of Meteren.

16. On 25th April the enemy launched a heavy attack on the front Haegedoorne to The Bluff, after severe bombardment.

His intention was evidently to capture Kemmel from the south, combined with an attack from the east, south of Wytschaete.

During the morning the enemy made progress and captured Kemmel and Kemmel village, the line at 1 p.m. running west of Dranoutre along the Millekruisse-La Clytte road with elements apparently still on Kemmel Hill, the British being forced back north of Wytschaete.

Orders were at once given to secure the line from La Clytte to Hallebast and from Hallebast to Kruisstraathoeck. Further reserves were moved up to Ouderdom, Dickebusch and Reninghelst, and 19th and 34th Divisions near Poperinghe were put under orders to move at short notice if required.

17. By the evening of 25th April the French line ran from north of Haegedoorne *via* Koudekot-Locre Chateau-Locre Hospice-south-east slopes of Scherpenberg-La Clytte. British line thence *via* Cheapside-Brasserie-Sniper's Barn-south of St. Eloi to The Bluff-Hill 60-Zillebeke-White Chateau and thence along Pilckem Ridge.

18. Orders were issued for the French D.A.N. to retake Kemmel and re-establish the line La Polka (inclusive)-Aircraft Farm-Donegal Farm-south of Dranoutre-Haegedoorne. The 25th British Division was placed under II French Cavalry Corps for the purpose of counter-attacking.

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

19. The attack was launched at 3 a.m. on 26th April by 39th French Division and 21st British Division.

The 21st Division penetrated through on a narrow front as far as the outskirts of Kemmel village, capturing fifty prisoners. The 39th French Division was held up on the line of the Kemmelbeek, the 21st British Division having subsequently to conform.

During the morning the enemy developed heavy attacks against the 9th British Division and captured the Spoilbank and the Brasserie after severe fighting, and after three unsuccessful attempts, captured Locre.

The 2nd Bedfords held on to The Bluff throughout the day.

20. Orders were given for the following readjustment of the line to be made on night 26th/27th April :

" II Corps to hold the present line as outposts and to hold Canal Bank line as main line as far south as Menin Gate.

" XXII Corps to hold from Menin Gate via Kruisstraathoeck Line—Cheapside to junction with French on Kemmelbeek.

" II Corps to man Brielen-Elverdinghe line and East Poperinghe line from 1,000 yards north-east of Peselhoeck to Ypres—Poperinghe Road.

" XXII Corps to man Kruisstraat—Cape Belge-Dickebusch—Millekruisse—La Clytte line.

" French to hold line Fontaine Heuck—west of Croix de Poperinghe—Mont Rouge—Scherpenberg to La Clytte and defences of Mont Rouge—Mont Noir—Mont Vidaigne—Mont des Cats and East Poperinghe line from Reninghelst—Abeele Road via

INTENSE BOMBARDMENT

Piebruck Spur and west of Fontaine Heuck to junction with XV Corps north of Fletre-Meteren Road.

"VIII Corps to hold with 34th and 59th Divisions the Brandhoek line from south of Ouderdom to Poperinghe-Ypres Road with posts in Vlamertinghe line, also East Poperinghe line from Ypres-Poperinghe Road to Reninghelst-Abeelee Road.

"Main Line.

"Canal-Ypres Ramparts-Shrapnel Corner-Chateau Segard-Elzenwalle Ridge Wood-Cheapside.

"Outpost Line.

"Line of Steenbeek-Bossaert Farm-Wieltje-Potijze-White Chateau-West end of Zillebeke Lake-Lock 8-Voormezeele (this to be held as an advanced post, if possible)."

This was successfully carried out as ordered, the Zillebeke Sluice Gates being destroyed.

21. On 27th and 28th April several local actions took place, principally at Voormezelle, the Mound and Locre.

22. On 29th April, after an intense bombardment which started at 3.10 a.m., the enemy attacked the fronts of 21st, 49th and 25th Divisions between 5 a.m. and 5.30 a.m., and was repulsed all along the line.

He attacked the 49th Division again at 6 a.m. and the attack was broken up, the enemy suffering severe losses in trying to advance in mass formation with bayonets fixed.

25th Division were attacked at 8.35 a.m.

During the morning the 25th Division repulsed

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

four attacks; 49th Division repulsed repeated attacks and the brunt of the attack was borne by 21st Division.

As the result, our line remained intact with the possible exception of a small sector of the advanced trench line.

23. The French were also heavily attacked about Locre.

Fighting continued throughout the day, especially in the region of Hyde Park Corner, which changed hands repeatedly.

It was thought that a serious attempt to capture Scherpenberg and Mont Rouge was in progress, but this at any rate was frustrated.

At the end of the day the French line ran through Locre Church, and Hyde Park Corner was in the hands of the French.

This was a very heavy day's fighting and the enemy losses were very severe.

24. The following divisions received special messages of congratulation from the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief :

9th	21st	29th	33rd	49th
19th	25th	31st	34th	1st Australian.

There is no doubt that the 29th April was the critical day.

The enemy attack failed that day. In no sector did he gain ground of any importance. The failure of this attempt on the 29th April, which had very far objectives—a captured map showed one of the divisions engaged to have had an objective $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant—appears to have convinced the enemy that nothing further was to be gained in Flanders without a complete reorganization of his

THE ENEMY SHOOTS HIS BOLT

troops, which his position in a narrow salient made extremely difficult to hide.

We had certain indications that the enemy intended to make another attack between Locre and Zillebeke on the 4th May, but this never materialized.

He had shot his bolt in Flanders. We had just managed to stop him, but only just. I do not think that his original attack on the 9th April ever aimed at anything beyond a local success. I always think he launched his original attack against us at a very lucky moment, just as the 50th Division was relieving the Portuguese and that he obtained far more success than he anticipated. The Local Commander, having obtained this success, no doubt begged the permission of the High Command to exploit it. It has happened many times before in history and no doubt will happen again. His gamble had failed, but only just.

We calculated that the enemy suffered some 120,000 casualties between the 9th April and the 8th August in the Lys Salient. 42 German Divisions were employed in holding about 30 miles of line, a large portion of which was exposed to concentrated artillery fire, for over three months during the summer. The result was that the enemy found themselves exhausted in the north and with insufficient new troops to do anything in the south. Might not Sir Douglas Haig have found himself in the same position had he listened to the many attempts to get him to release troops from the Western Front? One knows how Sir William Robertson supported him in this. He was very averse to making detachments. I maintain that the German advance from the 9th April, 1918, was a gamble which very nearly succeeded

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

ist as Gallipoli, was a gamble which very nearly succeeded. I have stood on the point reached by Allanson and his gallant Gurkhas, and I have talked since with Turkish officers who were there and also in Constantinople at that time. It was a last touch and go. One further effort, had it been possible, would have turned the scale and the Turks would have retired and a panic would have taken place in Constantinople. Had that taken place and the gamble succeeded no praise would have been too high for the brains which conceived it or for the troops which carried it out.

I often look back on that memorable month's fighting. On the visits which the Army Commander paid to those heroic divisions and brigades. To those units as they came out of the line for a well-earned rest. One must remember that they had nearly all been engaged only a month before the German attack on the Third and Fifth Armies.

It was a gruelling month. We were literally hanging on by our eyelids.

A General Headquarters line far in the rear was being dug for us to retire to. How the Chief hated the very mention of it.

What a tower of strength the late King of the Belgians was in those days. We saw him almost daily. He refused to entertain the idea of going back and he certainly did not want us to do so.

It was, indeed, a desperate situation.

We had hardly any reserves. Undoubtedly the enemy had gained a bigger success than he anticipated. He pressed home his advantage to the full and we lost our beloved Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, Kemmel and all our points of vantage for

HEARTRENDING ORDERS

which we had fought so hard, but we still hung on to Passchendaele.

The enemy was almost astride our communications. He pressed right down to Meteren and beyond. It was obvious it could not go on. It was galling enough to have lost the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge—so well won in 1917—but here was our Passchendaele, for which so many lives had been given, about to go.

I felt so much for our Chief during those days.

One day, however, after consulting with the Corps Commander holding Passchendaele (Hunter Weston), I decided to suggest to the Chief that we should have to withdraw from Passchendaele. I know how it stung him. "I won't have it," and he walked out of my room. A few moments afterwards he came back and laid his hand on my shoulder, saying, "You are right, issue the orders."

I wrote out those heartrending orders but, before they had gone, the Chief came back to ask if they had gone.

He made another attempt to stop them.

It was a scene which I shall never forget. There was the man, who by sheer determination and pluck had held the Ypres Salient for years against all comers and who had gained Messines and Passchendaele, being forced to withdraw.

How he hated giving it up. He knew it had to be. He knew that it was necessary for the safety of his men.

I shall not forget the night our troops slipped out of Passchendaele and our front line was once again just in front of Ypres.

The weeks that followed were momentous ones.

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

No words could adequately express the way in which the troops held on to their positions.

As stated above, nearly all the divisions had been fighting continuously since the 21st March. There were no fresh divisions.

The enemy launched attack after attack. A French Army Corps was sent up by lorry to our assistance and was put in the Kemmel Area.

We were bombed out of our Headquarters at Cassel and forced back to Blendecques, retaining Cassel as our advanced Headquarters.

The enemy broke through to Meteren and Strazeele.

How well I remember having to report to the Chief that the Army was in three pieces and his characteristic reply, "Well, that is better than being in four." Those words alone show his wonderful fighting spirit. It was, indeed, a near thing. The enemy at Strazeele—only a few miles from Hazebrouck and our line of communication.

We got word that the 1st Australian Division under Major-General Harold Walker was on its way to us by train. Could we hold on till then? We had no reserves. We turned out the students, servants and grooms from our Second Army School to hold on to Strazeele. Could we hold on?

Never shall I forget the message which said that the enemy had bombed Etaples Bridge and that the Australian Division would be four hours late.

Oh! those four hours.

I was at Hazebrouck when the trains at last arrived. I can see those Australians detraining and advancing to Strazeele. Glorious fellows and

A GREAT WRENCH

so were the servants and grooms whom they had relieved.

It was a desperate and critical situation and I hope it will be dealt with fully in the Official History of the War.

Fortunately the Army as a whole did not know that we were in such desperate straits and literally down to our last man.

Through it all the nerve of the Army Commander who was bearing the responsibility never faltered. He knew, as I knew, how near it was. He endured those four hours. No one could, however, have foreseen that that was the end. The enemy effort was spent. He never attacked again. The Salient was saved. The Channel Ports were saved. The General Headquarters line which had been prepared in the rear was never required. Our Chief had won through and that was all that mattered to us.

And so that month's fighting ended on 8th May, and with it my happy and close association with my dearly loved Chief. I had to go off at once to take up my appointment as Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff, under the late Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson.

Although about to start another two and a half years of a very happy association with the Commandant of the Staff College under whom I had served as a student, it meant nothing but long hours dealing with difficult problems in the War Office. It was, however, a great experience which has since been of great help to me and I can never forget Sir Henry Wilson's goodness to me.

It was a great wrench to leave the Second Army—its great Chief and the most wonderful and loyal Staff. I treasure such wonderful letters from the

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

Chief on leaving. They are too sacred to publish. I may add that he felt things so much that he was always unable to say anything on such occasions as parting with a friend. Great tears used to roll down his cheeks but, nevertheless, his meaning was more than understood by his handshake.

During the time I have been writing this memoir I have heard from all the principal members of the old Second Army Staff. They all show the wonderful influence which he exercised over us all. How we all leapt with joy to meet his wishes. How we treasured the confidence which he placed in us. How well we all knew that, as long as we had done our best, our Chief would back us through thick and thin whatever mistakes we might make. How by his own great personality he had made the way easy for us. It was he who had made Corps, Divisions, Brigades and lower formations accept us everywhere as their friends and helpers. We were accepted everywhere with open arms. He made it quite clear that Staff Officers are only servants of the Troops. Any Staff Officer who had any idea that his red tabs gave him any authority to be superior came down with a very heavy bump. He had a glorious sense of humour. He loved to "pull our legs," especially mine. He loved an amusing story but would not for a moment tolerate any story over the border. He showed his displeasure in no uncertain way. He would not tolerate any familiarity in speech of any senior officers by junior ones. If anyone in conversation mentioned that "Rawly" or "Birdie," meaning Sir Henry Rawlinson or Sir William Birdwood, had done something, he would at once say, "I presume you mean Sir Henry Rawlinson or Sir

" DEAD RIGHT "

William Birdwood." The offender did not do so again. He was a very strict disciplinarian. No more fair or just man has ever lived, but he had a very high sense of duty and he spared no one who abused his goodness. A Commander has many very unpleasant duties to perform both in war and peace, especially in the Great War where the strain and anxiety, loss of sleep, etc., told on so many until at length their places had to be taken by others. One knew well how hard they were fighting against being sent home. Many a time an officer has come into my office on the way to see the Army Commander full of protests, prepared to refuse at all costs to be sent home. The same officer has looked in again a few minutes after to say, " He was dead right," and went away bearing no malice. It is a gift to be able to do that. He had that gift.

Punctuality was another of his great qualities. Every morning he walked into breakfast at 7.30 a.m. Not one of us ever dared to be late, though we had some near shaves.

He hated a telephone and would never have one in his room. I remember so well when we went to Padua, I had a telephone in his room in the house which we occupied removed or rather hidden under a table. All of a sudden it went off under the table like an infernal machine. How he laughed. On that day another amusing incident occurred. The house was terribly cold and we only had wood fires which would not draw. One of his personal staff who could not speak a word of Italian was observed in a shop in Padua in British uniform on his knees blowing his cheeks out. He was apparently trying to buy some bellows and was successful.

THE SECOND ARMY HAS A HARD TIME

Before I pass on to later times when I no longer had the honour of serving under him perhaps it would not be out of place if I tried to give a picture of him from the point of view of the Staff Officer who was privileged to serve him and to study his ways. I say at once that he was the supreme head, he listened to all and then made his decision, which was final. He liked to know exactly what was going on. He wished all matters of importance referred to him. He would not tolerate decisions, except on minor details, made without his knowledge. He kept his fingers on the pulse of everything. He kept all patronage in his own hands. Every appointment was approved by him personally. No one was ever appointed to the Second Army without being given every chance. He had a wonderful way of making his wishes clear to his Staff. He wrote very little himself but had an extraordinary faculty of putting his finger on where any draft submitted to him failed. I speak with great knowledge on this point as I can never remember an instance in which I did not readily admit that his alterations were a great improvement on my humble efforts. It was always interesting as we worked longer together to get nearer and nearer to his wishes. I can say with pride that before I left him I often submitted memoranda which he approved without comment, which always pleased me.

His thoughtfulness for others was remarkable. How often did I find him in the office of the G.S.O.2. or G.S.O.3. or in the Intelligence Office ascertaining the latest information of the situation rather than have me disturbed if he thought I was busy, and the same with other Senior Officers of the Staff.

PERSONAL TALKS

In addition to his daily Conferences by which he kept every branch of the Staff in touch with the situation, he made a point of having a talk to each of the heads of his Staff so that he knew and could help them with their difficulties.

CHAPTER XII

GOOD-BYE TO FLANDERS. THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

THERE is little to relate from the Flanders front between May and September, 1918. All will remember that on the 8th August with the Fourth Army success in the south and the advance of the Australian and other troops, the German resistance began to crack. This reacted on the fronts of other Armies and it may be said that in the early days of September, 1918, the general situation had become very favourable to the Allies. The hostile forces then opposed to the Belgian and the British Second Army were very weak, and the moment was ripe for offensive action on a large scale elsewhere by the British, French and American forces. The general plan was to carry out an operation with a view to clearing the Belgian coast and the country between that coast and the River Lys.

For this plan, the following troops were placed by Marshal Foch under the orders of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, in addition to his own :

The British Second Army ;

Three French Infantry Divisions, and

One Cavalry Corps (three divisions).

The British Second Army, which comprised the II, XIX, X, and XV Corps, under command of General Sir H. Plumer, was, prior to the 28th

THE OFFENSIVE RESUMED

September, 1918, holding the line from just north of Ypres to Armentières. The offensive on the British front was to be undertaken by II Corps, on right of the Belgian Army, and XIX Corps, on right of II Corps, on a front of some 4½ miles south of the Ypres-Zonnebeke road. The XV and X Corps, on right of the XIX Corps, were ordered to watch their opportunity and take every advantage of the enemy weakening on their front to press his retirement.

The attack was launched at dawn of 28th September, 1918, after an intensive artillery bombardment of three hours' duration. Field guns were placed at intervals of thirty-eight yards.

By the end of the day the British Divisions had passed beyond the farthest limits of the Third Battle of Ypres (July–November, 1917).

South of the main attack, the X and XV Corps had carried their line slightly forward.

The advantages gained were followed up with the greatest vigour, and by the morning of the 6th October the line Ledeghem–Comines–Warneton–Fresnelle had been reached.

The rapid advance of the British troops necessitated the re-establishing of adequate communications in the area of the old Ypres battles. Every effort was put forth, and by the 14th October the restoration of communications was sufficiently advanced to permit of a resumption of the offensive. (It was originally intended to resume the attack on the 7th October.) During the period 6th–14th October, in order to lead the enemy to suppose an immediate advance was imminent, and to stop the diversion of his troops to the Belgian front, intensive harassing fire was employed.

The advance of the Allied Armies in the direction

GOOD-BYE TO FLANDERS

of Valenciennes, which was threatening the German communications with the south, coupled with the advance of the troops under H.M. the King of the Belgians, which was seriously threatening Lille from the north, led to very obvious preparations being made for a retirement from Lille.

The enemy artillery became generally active on 13th October, and carried out a counter-preparation. The attack was launched at 5.35 a.m. from Comines northwards in conjunction with the Belgian Army on the left. The Order of Battle from north to south on the front of the attack was as follows :

II Corps (St. Pieter-Vijfwegen-Kazelberg Road) ;

XIX Corps (Vijfwegen-Kazelberg to 500 yards north of Gheluwe) ;

X Corps (500 yards north of Gheluwe to one mile west of Wervicq).

The attack was again attended with complete success. By 15.00 the general line on the Army Front ran : outskirts of Wervicq-500 yards north of Wervicq-Menin railway-Coucou-1,000 yards west of Gollegheem-Steenbeek-1,000 yards east of Winkel St. Eloi. On this day enemy aircraft were active, and twenty of his machines were brought down. Three thousand, six hundred and seventy-three prisoners and 50 guns were captured during the day.

The advance was continued on 15th October and following days, and all objectives were taken and by 6 a.m. of 20th October the line Desselghem-Courtrai-Rolleghem-Leers was reached. By the 23rd October enemy resistance had considerably increased, there was much bombardment of back

CROSSINGS OF THE SCHELDT

areas and gas shelling, he had evidently collected artillery for the defence of Lille, where also the entrenchments were most elaborate. A combined attack by the II and XIX Corps and the left division (34th) of the X Corps was therefore ordered for 25th October. A general advance of over 3,000 yards was made. Further advances were made on the 26th October, without, however, meeting with much opposition.

The advance was resumed at 5.25 a.m. on 31st October. The troops employed were XIX Corps (35th Division), II Corps (31st and 34th Divisions), attacking in conjunction with the French on the left, with the right flank on the Schelde, with objectives :

(1) Anzeghem-Bergstraat-Tieghem-Vierschaat.

(2) Belgie Cabt-Caster-Varent-Kerkhove.

All objectives were taken by 16.15 hours. On this day 1,125 prisoners were captured.

As the result of the attack, the Second Army completed the occupation of the left bank of the Scheldt on the whole front.

On the 1st November patrols of II Corps (34th Division) pushed forward and reached Boschkant, Gyselbrechten and Hill 83, without encountering any opposition, the enemy having apparently withdrawn owing to the success of the attacks on 31st October.

During the 3rd November posts were established east of the Scheldt near Herinnes and Tenhove. Hostile artillery was very active all the day on the Bessuyt-Avelghem front. Further crossings of the Scheldt were effected on the 4th November, the patrols crossing in boats. There was great air activity on this day, twenty enemy aircraft and four observation balloons being destroyed. On

GOOD-BYE TO FLANDERS

the 4th November at 12 noon the Second Army ceased to be under the command of H.M. the King of the Belgians and reverted to the command of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief.

Many villages were shelled with gas by the enemy on 6th November–8th November. During the night of 8th/9th November patrols succeeded in crossing the Scheldt at numerous points, encountering little resistance, and by 9 a.m. our troops were on the eastern bank of the river on the whole Army front, crossing in boats and pontoons. The advance was more rapid on the southern portion of the Army front. The XIX Corps established itself on the eastern bank of the Scheldt, and commenced its advance at noon of 9th November. The British Fifth Army (on the right) occupied Mount St. Aubert at an early hour, in touch with the 40th Division, XV Corps, (Second Army). At midday the following general line had been reached: Bourgogne-Clipet and along the Clipet-Anseroeul road to just south of Anseroeul-railway junction south of Orroir-Escanaffles–thence along the railway to east of Meersche, in touch with 41st French Division, which had passed one battalion over the River Scheldt south of Melden.

Progress was rapid throughout the day, and scarcely any resistance was encountered. By nightfall the XIX Corps had gained touch with the VII French Corps, which held Etrichove.

Orders were issued for the 31st, 35th and 41st Divisions (XIX Corps) to resume the advance at 9 a.m. on 10th November to the general line Hurdumont–Boschstraat–Rooverst–Haunstraat, in touch with the French on their left, and the X Corps on their right. These orders were carried

ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

out ; practically no opposition was encountered, though the advanced troops were in constant touch with the enemy's rearguards.

By nightfall the following line had been reached :

X Corps : Southern end of Bois de Leuze-Arbre St. Pierre-Ellezeiles, with patrols well in advance.

XIX Corps : Hurdmont-northwards to Hauwa-traat, with advanced troops in Opbrakel and Nederbrakel.

On the following day, 11th November, the 29th and 30th Divisions (X Corps) and 31st, 35th and 41st Divisions (XIX Corps) advanced in the morning, and when hostilities ceased at 11 a.m., the 29th Division had reached the River Dendre front east of Hourain to north of Lessines (with a bridgehead east of Lessines), and the 30th Division was on a line east of Biercamp.

On the XIX Corps front, the 31st Division was just west of the Lessines-Grammont Road in touch with the 35th Division, which had reached the Dendre in Grammont, while the 41st Division was east of Gemeldorp, in touch with the 35th Division north of Grammont.

It was just before 11 a.m. on the 11th November that General Plumer heard that the Second Army had been chosen to be the Army of Occupation.

I think the most graphic way in which I can describe the advance to the Rhine is by giving extracts from the diary of Captain M. B. Heywood, D.S.O., M.V.O., of the Second Army Staff. This officer went out to the War as A.D.C. to General Plumer and did splendid work throughout the War on the Second Army Staff. His diary shows :

"Nov. 13th. We collected sixteen Divisions

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

that we were to take forward ; 2nd, 3rd, 22nd and Canadian Corps, 4th Army on our right. The advance was very difficult as all bridges and roads were blown up, telegraph poles and trees fell across the roads, railway lines blown up about every 200 yards and we had to feed our troops by lorries making trips of 160 miles through the devastated area. Roads very narrow *pavé* with two or three feet of mud either side, all full of our prisoners, Italians, Portuguese and Alsatians and local inhabitants released by Germans. All very hungry, with no blankets. Our supplies came from Calais !

" *Nov. 17th, Sunday.* Hard frost, Thanksgiving Service ; 3,000 troops, (2,000 spectators) marched past in Grand Place Roubaix. General took salute from the old Kommandatur, a satisfactory sight (Ruprecht of Bavaria's H.Q.).

" *Nov. 18th and 19th.* Plans continually altered owing to different instructions from G.H.Q. Some of our troops had to come from parts of the line 60 miles away. All roads full of civilians absolutely dead beat. I always came back with my car full of women and babies.

" *Nov. 21st.* Whole of our plan altered as only Second Army had to cross Frontier with the eleven divisions of 2nd, 4th, Canadian and 9th Corps. General re-shuffle.

" *Nov. 22nd.* Attended march past of our troops in Brussels before the King and Sir Herbert.

" *Nov. 24th.* Reached Namur after three punctures ; one on the field of Waterloo.

" *Nov. 27th.* Our first train reached Namur.

MUTINOUS GERMANS

Up to then lorries ran from Boulogne and Calais to Namur 250 miles, and the sleeper track over the Salient was almost impossible.

" Nov. 28th. Our advance being held up owing to lack of food, motored to Spa to see Armistice commission. Disturbances in most of big towns as Belgians wrecking houses of people who had been friendly to Germans. Nice to be saluted by German sentries at Hôtel Britannique Spa ; rear troops of Germans mutinous and undisciplined. By December 1st, supply situation very bad—General ordered two days halt. Our Cavalry crossed frontier and halted 12 miles east of it.

" Dec. 4th. Went with Phillip Hanson, V.C., to Bittsburg and watched our infantry across into Germany with fixed bayonets and bands playing—a glorious sight. Roads strewn with debris of German retreat ; surprised at number of dead horses. German civilians took no notice of us. The whole time we had trouble with rations and in keeping Divisions up to the march programme. The tail of the Canadian Corps was always lagging behind and 6th Corps bumping into them and so endless wrangling over billets. The men were very discontented as they had had no clean clothes or proper food since November 11th, and had marched a long way on bad roads. The Civilian authorities in Germany were terrified of the revolution that was taking place and of the mutinous troops who were looting shops, and we had to get the Guards Division into Cologne before the programme date.

" Dec. 10th. I went to Cologne and walked across the Hohenzollern Bridge, spending some

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

time in looking at the Rhine about which we had talked so much during the last four years.

"Dec. 12th. I stood with the Army Commander watching the Cavalry cross the Rhine. As we arrived the Union Jack was broken from the mast-head just underneath the enormous equestrian statue of Kaiser William. The Cavalry looked magnificent, and some Germans asked me why we had taken the trouble to rub the situation in by bringing picked troops out from England especially for the occasion. They crossed the Rhine to Tipperary, and the Soldiers' Chorus from Faust, and advanced to the neutral zone which was an arc of about 20 miles in diameter.

"Dec. 13th. The 2nd, 9th, 29th, 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions crossed the Rhine and occupied the bridge-head. We had a hectic time getting offices fixed up and trying to make things more comfortable for the troops. We were not allowed to buy food in Germany owing to fear of famine and ours had to come from Boulogne—parcels were looted *en route* and mails were frequently late. Owing to the nature of the ground, it was impossible to get football fields and hard to keep the men amused as they were mostly in bad billets in small villages. It was still impossible to get fresh clothing from the base and many of the men and officers were verminous and, naturally, most of them grouching. All our extra stores were held up and we thought it would be impossible to get anything through for the men for Christmas, but sent lorries to Paris and managed to get hold of pigs, turkeys, etc., in time. The chief trouble was that we could not get trains through, owing to the

THE OLD "CHIEF'S" TACT

French repatriating the bombarded villages and towns and trying to put back machinery into the looted works as soon as possible.

"*Dec. 26th.* The Germans had only food for eight weeks left and were, undoubtedly, very hard up—no raw material was allowed across the Rhine and manufacturers had to shut down. Games and amusements were gradually organized, but demobilization caused a lot of trouble largely owing to the English Press; everybody thought they should be demobilized at once and I among them; that there was not any serious trouble in our area either with our own troops or civilian population was largely due to the old 'Chief's' marvellous tact."

Some extracts of letters to his wife during this time are interesting. On the 20th May he writes :

"Our airmen have been doing great things. Here in the Second Army we have destroyed 39 German planes in 3 days."

On the 24th he writes :

"We had a useful little operation last night and took 40 prisoners: it all helps."

On the 27th he says :

"We had a good little show last night, carried out I am glad to say by a Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment."

The Duke of Connaught came over on the 30th and they had quite a nice little ceremony when he presented decorations to French officers.

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

On 2nd July the Duke again was with them, and returned to England the next day. On the 3rd July he says he was giving some military medals to some F.A.N.Y.'s who had most gallantly taken away the wounded during a bombing raid.

The same day he writes :

" I have just heard the Australians in the South have carried out a first-rate show, and captured 1,000 prisoners, and the French have had an equally good one."

On the 12th he writes :

" The Australians here did a very good operation yesterday and brought in almost 120 prisoners."

The next day, 13th July, he says :

" The operations up here yesterday and the day before were quite good. We got about 200 prisoners and very few casualties."

On the 14th he says :

" We had a success yesterday. The 6th Division took some ground we wanted and over 280 prisoners, a very good performance. I am very glad it was done by British troops."

On the 20th he says :

" We had a very good small show yesterday. We took back Meteren (or rather what used to be Meteren, because there is nothing left of the villages), and about 400 prisoners."

On the 30th the Australians had a successful show, taking 169 prisoners, and very few casualties. On the 6th August he writes :



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HM THE KING INVESTING GENERAL SIR H PLUMER WITH THE G.C.B., AUGUST 6TH, 1918,
AND SHAKING HANDS AFTER THE CEREMONY

THE KING'S VISIT

"The King came over yesterday, and went first to one of the Clearing Casualty stations where I met him. He looks very well and is in good spirits. Keppel, Stamfordham and Cromer are with him. He is spending a long day with us today. I only hope it will be fine, but it looks doubtful."

However, later he writes :

"The weather has been on the whole kind. He saw troops most of the morning in an informal way and finished up with a small parade, when he presented 3 V.C.'s and my G.C.B."

On the 9th he reports the success in the south when the Canadian and Australian Corps got over 7,000 prisoners and 100 guns, and the French 2,500. It was a complete surprise, the secret very well kept, and altogether, from all accounts, some 27,000 prisoners.

"The King is still here," he writes. "H.M. has indeed brought us luck. He is coming to our Church service to-morrow."

On the 18th August he writes just a line to say :

"De Lisle's Corps had a very successful operation yesterday. We got all the ground we wanted and 670 prisoners."

On the 27th he says :

"We had another little show last night, not many prisoners but all the ground we wanted. It all helps."

On the 26th he says that the Chief of the Belgian Staff came to lunch. On the 31st :

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

"The Germans have fallen back and we have got back Kemmel and other places. We do not know how far they mean to go. I quite expected them to give up Bailleul, but I did not think they would give up Kemmel without a fight. However, it is a very good thing for us."

On the 1st September he writes :

"We are making some progress, but we are not getting on as fast as I should like."

The next day they moved back to their old H.Q., which pleased them all.

On the 4th he reports that the progress though slow was steady. They got back Nieppe on the 3rd and then on to Lys. The next day he says he said good-bye to the other American General.

"I am sorry they are going and they are sorry to go. They are full of life and consequently attractive."

On the 5th September he says :

"We got on pretty well yesterday. De Lisle took Plogstadt village and Hill 60. We had some stiff fighting and we have not much to push with. Things are going very well. The Germans are going back pretty fast in front of the French and in front of our Fourth Army, and more slowly in front of our Third Army. I am delighted Fergusson was specially mentioned."

On the 12th he writes :

"I am sorry to say we are losing Robertson from here. He is going to G.H.Q. : it is promotion for him and better pay, and it is work for which

THE KING OF THE BELGIANS

his leg will not affect him, so it is a good thing for him in every way, but I shall be sorry to lose him. He is one of the old lot and has worked here with us all the time."

On the 16th he writes :

" The King of the Belgians asked me to go and see him yesterday afternoon ; he was very pleasant as he always is."

On the 25th :

" The Belgians and ourselves are attacking to-day. We started at 5.30. I am under the King of the Belgians for these operations. He (the King) came to tea yesterday, in very good spirits."

Later he says :

" We had a good day yesterday, a good deal better than I thought or expected—2,000 prisoners. The Belgians came along like anything, got 4,000 prisoners and all or nearly all the ground we were out to get."

The next he writes :

" We have got across the Messines and Wytschaete Ridge, now we ought to get on. It is such a relief."

Then :

" I don't expect you will get much news of our doings ; as we are under the King of the Belgians we do not figure in the British *communiqué*, and the Belgians are naturally full of their own doings."

On 1st October he writes :

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

"The weather was very bad all day yesterday : we got on pretty well considering all things. We are up to Comines and Wervicq on the river and pretty close to Menin. As you can imagine, we have not a superfluity of troops, and a day like yesterday takes a good lot out of them. However, they have done and are doing very well, and everyone is doing their utmost. The Second Army has taken some 3,500 prisoners and pretty well 100 guns. Our casualties the first day were extraordinarily light. We, of course, have had more since."

On the 14th he writes :

"We, the Belgians and the French are attacking this morning. It is a fine morning and I believe everything started all right."

Later :

"Our operations seem to be going all right. We have got 900-odd prisoners so far."

Still later on the same day :

"It has been a good day : we have done very well—the Second Army alone has taken 3,500 prisoners and about 50 guns. The French took 2,500, the Belgians 3,000."

The next day he says :

"We are attacking again this morning, but not on a large scale."

The same evening he says :

"We have advanced our line a good bit. The troops have done very well."

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

Army is concerned we have done all we were supposed to do this side of the Scheldt."

The next day he says :

" Our prisoners amounted to 1,125, and our casualties were very light. The troops are all very pleased with themselves."

He came over on the night of the 12th for five days. He had not been in England for over a year, for when he was coming he was sent off to Italy and after his return to the Second Army he could not leave. He returned on the 19th.

They moved to Namur on the 23rd. On the 22nd he rode into Brussels with the King and Queen. He says :

" They had a wonderful reception, really magnificent. It was a most spontaneous exhibition of personal devotion to the King and Queen. The King and Queen rode first, followed by their two sons and their daughter and our Prince Albert. I rode just behind with the French General."

On the 28th he heard that King George, who was coming to see the troops would not be able to come to the Second Army at all. He was very disappointed for the sake of the troops, but it made things easier for the move.

" We shall probably go to Spa on Saturday," he writes. " The Corps that will go into Germany are the II (Jacob) with the 9th, 29th and New Zealand Divisions, the Canadians (Currie) with the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions, the VI (Haldane) with the Guards 3rd and 2nd Divisions and the IX (Braithwaite) with the 1st, 6th and 62nd Division."

THE KING'S MESSAGE

On the 29th he writes :

“ I think I told you that Sir Charles Fergusson is to be the Military Governor of Cologne. I am very glad ; he will be a great help. We start for Spa early to-morrow morning. I am going to see the Cavalry on my way.”

The following is the message he received from the King who was then visiting the troops : ¹

“ I cannot leave Flanders without letting you know how sorry I am not to have been able to visit the Second Army and personally to congratulate you on its triumphs. During the past few days I have visited with pride and admiration the scenes of the famous battles with which the name of the Second Army will ever be associated. Rest assured that I follow with keen interest the daily onward march of your Columns and I trust that all ranks will soon be comfortably settled in their winter quarters.

GEORGE R.I.

On the 4th December he writes from Spa :

“ I had to interview a German General, Von Winterfeldt, about sending troops to Cologne ahead of the others. So far only the cavalry have crossed the frontier (the infantry cross to-morrow). I was at a place called Montjoie yesterday where the cavalry are. So far the attitude of the in-

¹ I find this telegram was not sent until the 9th of December when he writes : “ I have just had the enclosed delightful telegram from the King. I am sending it to you at once. I know you will like to keep it.”

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

habitants is a sort of studied indifference combined with curiosity.

"I think we shall move our headquarters forward about the 8th or 9th to a place called Duren which is about half-way between here and Cologne."

Later on he writes :

"It is a great honour to be the Army of Occupation, but it carries a good many penalties with it. I can see it will not be a bed of roses by any means. It has turned out a dreadfully wet day and all our troops are on the march getting wet through. One of the trains of supplies has broken down again, and the 1st Canadian Division will have to halt again to-morrow. All very tiresome. However, the War is over and men are not being killed."

On the 9th he writes from Duren :

"We arrived here yesterday morning : it took us about 3 hours by motor. We did not pass through a very interesting country, a manufacturing district, coal, etc. Fergusson will go into Cologne to-morrow as Military Governor. They seem quiet enough there. We have got Cavalry and Infantry all round it. I want to keep the troops as far as possible out of the town itself."

(It was at this time that he received the telegram from the King.)

On the 12th he writes :

"The weather was not very kind to us to-day, but it might have been worse, and though it did come on to rain it did not begin until nearly all

ENTRY INTO COLOGNE

the troops had passed. I admit I was thrilled. The 2nd and 9th Cavalry Brigades marched through Cologne across the Rhine this morning. I and the Staff and Kavanagh and Jacob stood at the entrance of the Hohenzollern Bridge by the Kaiser's Statue, and at 10 o'clock the Union Jack was unfurled and the troops commenced to cross. The Band of the Blues played them past, men and horses looked splendid. They took about 1½ hours to pass.

"To-morrow the Infantry go across. Fergusson will see the 9th Division cross by this Bridge, Jacob and I will see the 29th and then I go on and see the 1st Canadian Division and Currie sees the 2nd Canadian. Each Division will take 4 to 5 hours to cross."

He writes as follows about the entry of the other troops into Cologne :

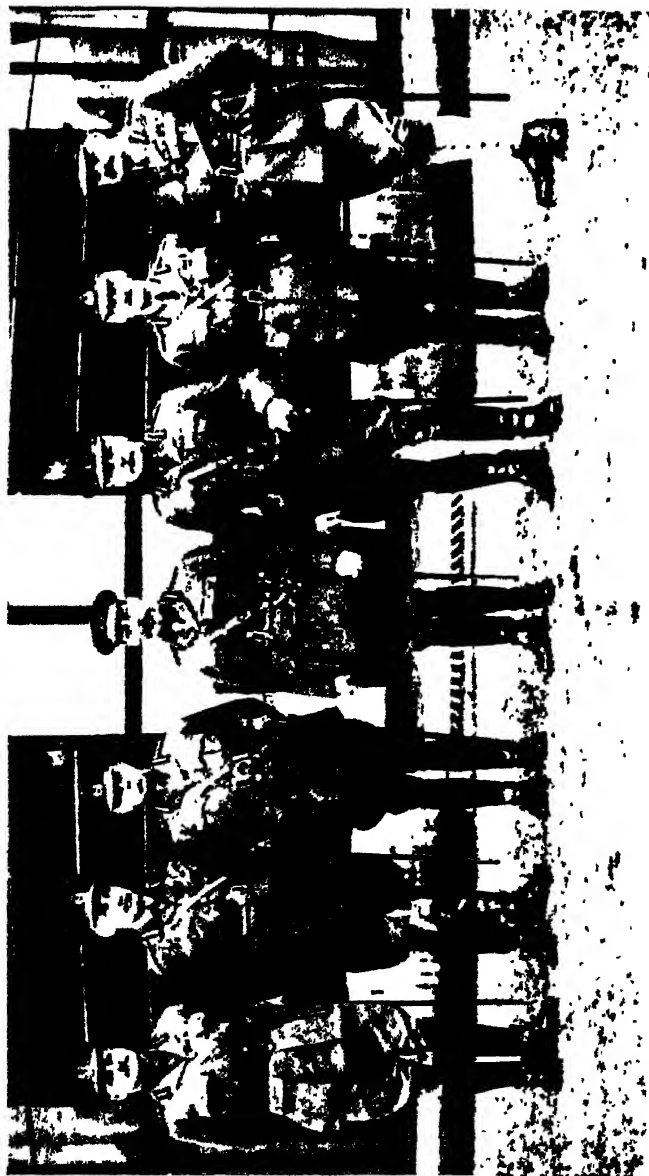
"The march of the infantry and artillery across the Rhine yesterday was marred as a spectacle by the rain, which continued all day : it was very hard luck on the men as they had taken an immense amount of trouble to turn out well, and notwithstanding the weather they looked wonderfully well. They went over four bridges, starting at 9.30 and were not over till after 3, so the people of Cologne saw some troops."

He came over with Sir Douglas and they drove from Victoria to Buckingham Palace, and were given a tremendous welcome from the crowd. The ten days passed very quickly, and on the 31st he was back in Cologne. He writes :

THE ADVANCE TO THE RHINE

“ Things seem very quiet here and nothing much seems to have happened.”

He took part in the Victory March through London with Sir Douglas Haig and the other Army Commanders. They had a great reception.



Staff to Photo-Lithon

HIS MAJESTY THE KING WITH HIS GENERALS

Byss

Hug

Horn

Pomer

H.M. Im King

RAWLINSON

BIRDWOOD

CHAPTER XIII
HIS ADMINISTRATION OF OCCUPIED
TERRITORY

INCLUDING AN ACCOUNT BY SIR CHARLES FERGUSON

EARLY in December, 1918, General Sir Charles Fergusson Bart., was appointed Military Governor of the occupied German territory in the British zone under General Plumer.

They had both been great friends for many years. It was, therefore, a very happy occurrence that they should find themselves entrusted with the difficult task of administering the late enemy country.

I am much indebted to General Sir Charles Fergusson for the following:

My first acquaintance with Lord Plumer was in October, 1907, when I was appointed B.G.G.S. on the Headquarter Staff in Ireland, under Lord Grenfell. Sir Herbert (as he then was) was in command of the 5th Division, with his headquarters at the Curragh. At the time of my appointment, Command manœuvres in conjunction with the 6th Division under General Parsons had just ended. For some reason, these manœuvres had led to some friction between the two divisions, and between them and the Headquarter Staff, and I was warned to be very careful and diplomatic in my official dealings with the G.O.C. 5th Division. He was said to be somewhat

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

prickly, and it was with some trepidation that I approached him.

I need not have been nervous. From first to last there was nothing but extreme courtesy and kindness shown to me, even when the Commander-in-Chief's decisions were contrary to the Divisional General's representations, which on more than one occasion was the case. These decisions were invariably loyally accepted, and on no single occasion was any difficulty raised. On the contrary, from the point of view of the Headquarter Staff, no General could have been more approachable or more consistently helpful.

Under Sir Herbert's command, the 5th Division was raised to a very high state of efficiency as a fighting unit. His system of training was in a marked degree practical and in some respects original. He aimed at developing initiative and resource in the junior ranks, and demanded a very high standard of physical efficiency and endurance from the troops. During the training season of 1908, throughout company and battalion training, he introduced the practice of sending out small columns, sometimes of infantry alone, sometimes of all arms, for a few days at a time, which maintained themselves, buying their supplies and shifting for themselves in all respects. During these periods these columns carried on a sort of guerilla warfare in the Wicklow Mountains and adjacent area. They were liable to attack or to be attacked night or day, and schemes were drawn up in a way to give the utmost interest and instruction. They were strenuous times for all ranks, but the effect was to give to all units in the division a remarkable power of mobility and handiness, and to the subordinate commanders a

THE SECRET OF DEVOTION

capacity for leadership which made the division conspicuous in the following years. In my capacity as Inspector of Infantry from 1909 to 1912 I was in a position to note the effects of this system of training.

As a trainer of troops for war, Sir Herbert had undoubtedly few if any equals. He was always himself at the height of physical fitness, hunted regularly, and had an inexhaustible energy which communicated itself throughout his command. It was a happy division, under a Commander who was trusted and beloved.

I served as Corps Commander under Sir Herbert Plumer in the Second Army during 1915 and part of 1916. It is hardly necessary to refer to what so many others must have recorded, the unfailing kindness, help, and encouragement which he gave to his subordinates. He was strict and sometimes almost exacting; but a visit from him was a tonic, and his calmness and optimism made the dark days (of which there were not a few) comparatively light and cheerful. I left his command in the middle of 1916 and did not meet him again until after the Armistice. But he never failed, whenever my new Corps carried out a successful operation, to send a kind and encouraging letter or telegram of congratulation and good wishes, so characteristic of the kind-heartedness and sympathy which were the secret of the devotion which he inspired in those who had the good fortune to serve under his command.

After the Armistice, I was appointed Military Governor of the occupied German territory in the British zone, and on 2nd December, 1918, I reached Spa and reported to Sir Herbert who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army on the

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

Rhine. We were there for some ten days during which the plans for the occupation were discussed, and on 11th December I moved into Cologne, the Commander-in-Chief and his Staff following from Duren two days later.

Sir Herbert's command of the Rhine lasted until April, 1919, when he left to take up the Malta command. During those few months I was more closely associated with him than at any other time during my service, seeing him daily and often two or three times a day. He had a difficult task, both on the military and civil side of his administration. Such a dual régime is always difficult, as it is apt to lead to friction between the two branches of the Staff. Corps and Divisional Commanders filled a double rôle, and the distinction between military and civil questions was not always easy to determine. Sir Herbert Plumer's personality and leadership, however, overcame the difficulties. He laid down the policy, and kept in the closest touch with both military and civil sides, and all knew that orders issued emanated from him and were his personal orders. Gradually a system was evolved which worked smoothly, and an administration was built up and developed to an efficiency which under a less strong and tactful commander would have been impossible.

On the military side, one of the difficulties lay in keeping up the strict discipline among the troops which was so essential in an Army of Occupation in a foreign land. Among both officers and men there was war-weariness and some restlessness. Numbers of the best officers and men—i.e. those who had civil employment at home offered to them—were demobilized and went home. Those who remained were not generally of the

GERMANY IN TURMOIL

same high quality. Evil influences both from home and abroad were active in endeavouring to promote discontent and worse. Here again under a weak man there might have been trouble. Under Plumer there was none. He knew exactly what it was necessary to enforce, and what it was wise to leave alone. He demanded and enforced the strictest discipline, but he did it with tact and consideration. Consequently during those anxious months the discipline of the troops on the Rhine never relaxed. Officers and men trusted their Chief and gave him the fullest confidence and support.

But the problems of civil administration were even more serious. First and foremost was that of the feeding of the civil population in the British zone of occupation. A stringent blockade on the importation of foodstuffs into Germany was in force, and food in the occupied territory was scarce. After prolonged representations sanction was given for the supply from British stocks so much food per week for the poorer inhabitants of the area, but this again was stultified by the proviso that it must be paid for in cash before delivery, an impossible condition under existing circumstances. This food problem was a constant worry, and it was not until well on in March, 1919, that the question was finally settled.

Again, the industrial situation was a never-ending problem. Germany was in a turmoil. The January elections had returned the Government to power, but without an independent majority. It was unable to suppress the Spartacists (Bolsheviks) without the help of the army, but it was loth to enlist that help in case the army and reactionary party became too strong. The Sparta-

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

cists were active everywhere stirring up industrial trouble. Dusseldorf, just over the border, was the scene of constant fighting, and the general unrest began to extend into the British area. Strikes were fomented, and there was a danger lest by the cutting off of electric light and power and water, and by the cessation of work in the factories in Sölingen, Beurath and other centres, a situation might be created which would get beyond control.

By the beginning of April the industrial unrest had become so widespread and threatening as to be a serious menace to peace in the occupied territory. Plumer decided that it must end. After full consideration, he took the drastic step of issuing a proclamation declaring strikes to be illegal and forbidden. It was a bold step, for an organized and determined resistance, if successful, would have been fatal to our prestige and influence. The proclamation pointed out that it was in the interest of the people themselves that the industrial trouble raging in Germany proper should not extend to the occupied territory, as it would inevitably lead to misery and starvation. Strikes were therefore forbidden. All industrial disputes were to be brought before an Arbitration Court of British Officers, sitting with assessors representing the parties in dispute, two from each side. The Court's award was to be final, subject only to review by the Commander-in-Chief.

After a first gasp of astonishment, the proclamation was generally well received. The Rhinelanders are an orderly people, and the good sense of the new measure was recognized. The Arbitration Court was quickly organized and at work. The members were specially picked officers who knew Germany and the Germans, and experts in

THE REAL TRIAL OF STRENGTH

the language. At first there was some reluctance to submit disputes to their jurisdiction, but it was not long before these Courts gained the full confidence of the people. Disputes were satisfactorily settled, and the justice and good sense of the awards universally recognized. So popular indeed did the Arbitration Courts become, that restrictions had to be imposed on the character of the cases submitted to them.

It was not until after Plumer had left that the real trial of strength came. In May there were two attempts at strikes on a large scale, one in the large railway works in Cologne, one in the factories at Beurath and surrounding area. The instant arrest and deportation of the leaders and others caused their collapse within forty-eight hours. Both were complete failures, and there was no other industrial trouble during the rest of my time in Cologne.

Thus, Plumer's policy was completely successful, and the occupied territory remained peaceful until peace was declared and ratified later in the year. In the short space of five months he had evolved a system of administration which stood every test, and which was acknowledged by the Germans themselves as eminently sound; strict, but humane and just. After his departure, there was frequent testimony to that effect from leading Germans in Cologne.

We were a very happy family in Cologne under General Plumer's command. His hospitality was unbounded, and the dinner-parties and evening gatherings at his house were in every way delightful. He was a charming host, and always at pains to make his guests feel at home. He never ceased in his endeavours to promote the happiness

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

and comfort of the officers and men under his command, by planning all that could be done to mitigate the irksomeness of life in the Army of Occupation.

A characteristic incident is told by General Sir A. Montgomery Massingberd (now C. T. G. S.) who was then on the Headquarter Staff at Cologne. The slight friction alluded to by Sir Charles Fergusson caused the general to send him to pour oil on the troubled waters. When he returned to report on his mission he said: "They complain that Sir Charles is too much of a gentleman." The Commander-in-Chief just paused and then said: "Is that possible?"

His departure was characteristic. Sir William Robertson, his successor, arrived on Sunday, 20th April. On the evening of the 21st, some of us went to say good-bye to General Plumer at his house, and that night he slipped away quietly by train, refusing any ceremony and asking that no one should come to the station to see him off. He left a great blank.

GENERAL PLUMER'S WAY

"A correspondent of the *Vorwärts*, although apologetic about citing an English example, wishes that the mode in which General Plumer has been dealing with strikes in occupied territory could be applied to the rest of Germany. When the epidemic of strikes began to threaten the zone of English occupation, General Plumer issued a proclamation pointing out the danger of industrial unrest, saying that riots and disturbances could not improve matters, forbidding strikes, and offering arbitration by the English authorities. At the

FEEDING THE POPULATION

request of the Germans the wording of the proclamation was modified, but it remained in fact a suspension of the right to strike, the institution of compulsory arbitration, and the enforcement of the award.

"The course taken has been successful, and the correspondent has nothing but praise for the spirit in which it is being carried out."

From *The Times*, April, 1919.

CIVIL RULE ON THE RHINE

"It is announced from Cologne that, as soon as Peace has been ratified, military government on the Rhine will come to an end. . . . Under the Commander-in-Chief of the Rhine Army, the rule and administration of the occupied territory have been well and wisely conducted, and the handling of labour questions, in particular, had tided over several crises that might easily have led to awkward situations."

From *The Times*, July, 1919.

Before taking my readers, as the B.B.C. say, "over to Malta," it may be of interest to add a little to what Sir Charles Fergusson has said regarding the feeding of the German civil population in the British zone of occupation, the problem which caused Sir Herbert Plumer such anxiety.

I quote from *The Times* of 11th March, 1919, in which a description is given of the meeting of the Council of Ten regarding the size of the Army to be allowed to Germany in the future. In view of the situation to-day, when I read that Germany proposes to have an army of 550,000 men, it is interesting to note that the Council first of all

OCCUPIED TERRITORY

thought that the German Army of the future should be limited to 100,000 men to serve for twelve years. Marshal Foch subsequently recommended 200,000 men serving for one year and 9,000 officers. Mr. Lloyd George suggested 200,000 men for twelve years. The Military Commission proposed 140,000 men for twelve years and 6,000 officers. That is to say eleven Infantry Divisions and three Cavalry Divisions organized into four Army Corps with one Army Staff, Germany to be called upon to demobilize all men in excess of these numbers.

It was in the midst of these very serious discussions on the future of Germany that a dramatic intervention occurred. Mr. Lloyd George received a telegram from General Plumer which he read at once to the assembled Council.

In this dispatch General Plumer painted the food situation, at any rate so far as Western Germany was concerned, in very sombre tones, and asked for an immediate supply of food in order to counteract Bolshevist agitation. Perhaps the most impressive passage in his telegram was that in which he pointed out how bad was the effect produced upon the British Army of the spectacle of the sufferings of German women and children. When the Prime Minister had finished reading this dispatch he remarked, with some emphasis: "Gentlemen, you cannot say that General Plumer is a pro-German."

This voice of reality speaking from the Rhine had a very great effect upon the Council, which then decided that the negotiations interrupted at Spa should be resumed at Brussels as quickly as possible with a view to supplying Germany with food. There was general agreement that the re-

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S THANKS

victualling of Germany should be dealt with at once. But, as was natural, the French were determined to see to it that Germany's resources for reparation should not be diminished. It had been suggested by the Supreme Economic Council that twenty German ships should be handed over first of all, and an equivalent in food be given to the enemy, that the second instalment of German shipping should consist of 100 vessels, and the third of all the remaining merchantmen.

After General Plumer's long-distance intervention in the Paris debate there was some slight change of tendency, and the Council agreed that the whole merchant fleet should be handed over in one lot.

In a letter to his wife at that time General Plumer says :

" I have seen the Food Staff Officer and have told him to tell Foch that unless they allow food for the Germans to come here, there will be trouble and my Army will be a police force."

There is no doubt that General Plumer's wise appreciation of the situation and the action which he took avoided a very serious situation.

The following extract from a telegram from the Prime Minister to General Plumer is interesting :

" Many thanks for your telegram. It arrived at most opportune moment as I received it during discussion of this very question at the Inter-Allied Conference and it produced deep impression on all present."

Just before going to Malta they took 22, Ennismore Gardens so as to have a home to which to return.

THE FOOD SITUATION

Navy, the Army and what he called the Auxiliary Force, which consisted of that great body of workers and helpers at home. It was that combination of the three forces which brought about the result that had been achieved. He wished, like all other Army Commanders, to take the opportunity of saying how thoroughly all ranks of the Army realized what they owed to the Navy. An island Empire, as we were, we must depend on the freedom of our communications, for on that freedom depended the very existence of our armies overseas. The Senior Service never failed in maintaining those communications and there had been splendid co-operation and co-ordination between the two services throughout.

Of the spirit which animated our troops and of their dogged determination to fight on no praise could be too great. He did not think any nation, on whatever side it was fighting, displayed the same wonderful qualities as those of the British Infantrymen, in the way in which they fought, took punishment and fought again. They were helped by the wonderful powers of leadership of our young and inexperienced officers—powers which amazed the older and more experienced officers. They never forgot that their first duty was to look to the welfare and comfort of those under them, as the responsibility entrusted to them was the greatest ever entrusted to any man—the safety of other men's lives. They could not have done all that was done if it had not been for the auxiliary forces of workers and helpers at home. They knew that no sacrifice was too great for them to carry out, if only by so doing they could render some service, however small, to their friends and comrades fighting at the front. The nation was

SACRIFICE

at one, and with such a spirit behind them victory was certain, and our troops could not be discouraged and never were discouraged. The results could not be achieved, and were not achieved, without sacrifice. The Nation offered up the Sacrifice, the Sacrifice was accepted and the price was paid. Those who had returned home had seen evidence of that. They noticed many gaps amongst their relatives and friends and they knew that many of those gaps occurred through the shame and sorrow, anxiety and suffering of the War. They saw many who were aged, aged more than four or five ordinary years would account for. They saw many poorer in health and poorer in circumstances and they knew that that was the sacrifice that those at home had gladly paid in order to render service to their country. Those at home had seen evidence of the sacrifice paid out there. They had seen week by week and month by month men who a short time ago left this country in full health and spirits, in all the vigour of manhood, return scarred, maimed, shattered in health, broken in body, but never broken in spirit. They knew that all the men who came home thus were received with the greatest tenderness and care and that everything possible that devotion and care could do was done to relieve their suffering. He was confident that the City of York, the County of Yorkshire and, indeed the whole of the United Kingdom, would do everything possible to lighten the lot and ease the burden of the men who, consequent upon service for their country, had suffered disablement, and must be at a disadvantage, as compared with their fellow citizens, for the remainder of their lives.

THE FOOD SITUATION

There were some who had paid the supreme sacrifice of all. Many thousands left this country to return no more. They could not bring them back, but they had the consolation that to them belonged all the honour and glory. As the youngest freeman in the City of York, he concluded by asking the Lord Mayor, and through him all the Citizens of York and Yorkshire to keep religiously and sacredly what had been so aptly described as a roll of honour and that the names thereon be publicly announced on certain occasions so that the children might be taught who were the true heroes of the War and that the relatives of the men would be made to feel that they had a prescriptive right to the message Marshal Foch sent to the soldiers of France: "Be proud." He knew that everyone who had been through the campaign and was present that day realized that it was not those who had come back who had won the War but those who had not come back. If they were sincere surely they could ask themselves whether there was any way in which they could help to repay them. The War had surely taught workers and fighters alike a true sense of proportion. It had taught them what things really mattered. If they could ask those who had fallen how they could repay them for their great sacrifice he felt sure their answer would be, "What we ask you to do is to carry on as citizens the principles for which we fought and died." You must have always in all your duties, thought and words present before you that the real thing that matters is what service you can do to uphold the honour and integrity of the British Empire.

On 20th May they went to Eton. In a later

ETON

chapter I have described that memorable gathering of Etonian Generals and given the speech which Sir Herbert Plumer made on that occasion.

On 21st May he received the Freedom of the Worshipful Company of the Grocers and on the 22nd that of the Salters.

CHAPTER XIV

MALTA

I REMEMBER so well being one of many who went to Victoria Station to see Sir Herbert and Lady Plumer off to Malta on 4th June, 1919, and to wish them all good luck. I little thought that within a few days the new Governor would be faced with such a difficult situation. Whilst he was actually at sea, serious riots broke out in Malta, the cause of which will be mentioned later, and between Marseilles and Malta he received a wireless message from the Acting Governor, strongly advising him to delay his official landing as there were serious riots on the Island. He accordingly arrived some hours later as requested. I am indebted to his Military Secretary (Captain Gubbins) who accompanied him for the following graphic account of his arrival. It is, in my opinion, an excellent example of the instant effect of his personality. He showed from the moment he put foot on shore that he was the Governor and was afraid of no one. His action won their loyalty within a few minutes.

“ After receiving the usual formal addresses at the Customs House in the Grand Harbour of Valletta, he stepped into his car with Lady Plumer beside him to motor up to Valletta Palace.

“ The narrow street and side streets were

FEARLESS ARRIVAL

thronged with people, but with a complete disregard for his personal safety he told the driver to proceed at a walking pace. On arrival at the Palace Square there was a crowd of some thousands of people. Sir Herbert stopped the car, got out, and asked where the Guard was. The guardroom was some hundred yards from his car, and the Guard could not be seen for the crowd. The Governor started, however, to proceed through the crowd towards the guard, apparently completely oblivious of any possible danger. The crowd melted away before him.

“ He then saw two laurel wreaths on the ground and asked what they were. He was told that they marked the spots where victims of the riots had fallen on the previous day. He gave instructions for the wreaths to be removed immediately.

“ After inspecting the Guard he walked back to his Palace where he found in the courtyard a large body of bluejackets.

“ ‘ What is this ? ’ he asked.

“ ‘ Your guard sir,’ replied the G.O.C.

“ ‘ How many bluejackets are there ? ’

“ ‘ Three hundred, sir,’ was the answer.

“ ‘ March out all but twenty within ten minutes,’ ordered the Governor.

“ The people of Malta saw in this first morning that they had to deal with a man, who was not afraid of them, and was prepared not only to act but to act quickly and to have his orders obeyed promptly.

“ They soon learnt that they had in the new Governor one who was anxious to learn their difficulties and to help them overcome the same.

MALTA

After his arrival there was no more rioting, and the people of Malta were able to settle down to a period of peace and prosperity such as they had not known for many years.

“The Field-Marshal arrived during riots and left five years later a flag-bedecked, flower-strewn Valletta crowded with Maltese who had come to say ‘good-bye’ to a man whom they had learnt to love and deeply respect.”

I am indebted to Sir William Robertson, who now lives at Gibraltar for the following interesting summary of Lord Plumer’s administration of Malta. Sir William was Lieutenant-Governor of Malta at the time.

I often think that Malta to-day must owe much to Lord Plumer’s wise foresight and judgment.

Sir William Robertson writes :

“I first saw Field-Marshal Viscount Plumer (General Sir Herbert Plumer, as he then was) in June, 1919, when he arrived in Malta to take over the administration of the Island as Governor and Commander-in-Chief, and I was privileged to serve under him as Lieutenant-Governor during the whole time of his tenure of that office.

“The moment of his arrival was not one of the happiest, as there had been disturbances of a somewhat serious nature for three or four days, and the streets between the Port and Valletta Palace were guarded by troops.

“Of the causes of these disturbances it is necessary to say a few words. The population of the Island exceeds 2,000 per square mile, and although every available foot of ground is in-

DISCONTENT AND VIOLENCE

dustriously tilled, less than half that population can find support from the land, the remainder being dependent for their livelihood on crafts, commerce, fishing or ordinary labour. Employment was, at the time, of a precarious character, trade being slow to recover after the War. Labour wages had always been low, but in pre-war times the cost of bread—the staple food—was small, and while there was much poverty living was possible when employment was available. During the War the cost of bread increased by 200 per cent, and although there was material increase in wages, this was by no means in correspondence with the cost of living.

“ Difficulties were, moreover, increased after the Armistice, which removed the necessity for employment of numerous Maltese labourers on Military services both in the Island and abroad, and that at a time when other occupations were hard to find. Where there is hunger, discontent needs only opportunity to express itself in violence. The opportunity had arisen a few days before Lord Plumer landed.

“ The form of government which then existed in Malta was that known as Crown Colony Government. There was a Single Legislative Council with elected and official members, the latter being in the majority, executive authority resting with the Governor and the Executive Council, the members of which were appointed by the Secretary of State. For many years there had been a movement in favour of the institution of a Council with an elected majority, and such a Council was actually established in 1887. For various reasons

MALTA

this Constitution proved unsatisfactory, and a return was made to the principle of a Council with an official majority. This did not satisfy extremists, and it had for some time been usual for the majority of the elected members to take no part in the proceedings of the Council, appearing only so often as was necessary to retain their seats. When the War ended, agitation for a change of government assumed more prominence and a public meeting was called with the object of formulating demands for political changes. The labouring classes had little interest in politics but, as explained above, hunger and want had bred discontent and a political meeting usually provides excitement. On the occasion of this meeting the mob got out of hand and resorted to looting and burning, their wrath being mainly directed against the millers, though political opponents of the extremists also suffered. The police proved incapable of dealing with the situation, and troops were called out before order could be restored. Unrest and uncertainty remained during the next few days, naval as well as military pickets being maintained throughout Valletta and the environments of the harbour.

“Knowing nothing of the General—as he then was—one expected to be met with some caustic inquiry regarding the disturbed conditions under which he was expected to assume office. It was a pleasant relief to be greeted instead with a ‘Hallo!’ and a cheerful grin. With no loss of time and but little explanation he seemed to grasp the situation, sent for elected members of council and political leaders, listened sympathetically to

ARRESTING SIMPLICITY

what they had to say and then spoke to them. The general atmosphere had been tense and apprehensive; in the city restless and even threatening. It was amazing to see how quickly recognition of the presence of an unperturbed and firm leader changed this to one of confidence and calm.

“ Lord Plumer was not long in realizing that for effective administration a clear knowledge of Malta—its people and its affairs—was essential, and this he set himself to acquire. Systematic and thorough, as in everything, he made himself master of facts and problems of importance in the time which most men take on preliminary inquiries. Then he dealt with such matters as demanded early action, and proceeded more deliberately to form his views on questions for which no satisfactory solution had as yet been propounded, as well as on others which had not excited political interest but were clearly vital to the well-being of the Island. Personal visits to schools, churches, institutions, places and people soon gave him insight into the needs of the islanders and made him a familiar figure to them. I do not know whether it had been necessary for him in previous commands to devote special attention to public speaking. He found this a frequent need in Malta, and I have never listened to a more impressive speaker. Without any flights of oratory, he made one feel that he had a message, and this he gave with all the arresting simplicity of Lincoln. Three speeches of his stand out in my memory. The first, when he unveiled a tablet in the Presbyterian Church in memory of

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members of that church who had fallen in the War. Utterly unlike the typical funeral oration, there was a sense of majesty in his simple words, ringing as they did with confidence and faith, which made it impossible to listen to them without emotion.

“The second was a speech addressed to the Parish Priests of the Island at the Festival of Candlemas. By ancient custom all parish priests attend that day at Valletta Palace, present the Governor with large candles, one on behalf of each parish, and are addressed by him in the State Room. He had already taken part in one such ceremony not long after his arrival, but he had meanwhile learnt to appreciate the deep attachment of the people to the observances of their religion, and the influence exercised by their spiritual leaders. Clearly and forcibly he spoke of these things, then passed on to explain wherein pastors so often failed in their duty as shepherds of their flocks, and the reason for such failures, ‘Ignorance and apathy.’ Startling as it was to hear a stalwart Protestant Soldier fearlessly speaking of their duty to a body of Roman Catholic priests, it was even more remarkable to observe the reception of his remarks—first with surprise, then illumination, and finally grateful acquiescence, with no touch of resentment or displeasure—a striking tribute to the effect of his personality.

““This is the fifth anniversary of the feast of Candlemas on which I, as Governor, have had the privilege of welcoming you here as parish priests of the Island. I am sorry that it will be the last

ATHEISM AND ANARCHY

occasion. When the time comes for my wife and I to leave Malta we shall carry away with us many happy memories, and I can assure you that among these memories, this old-world annual ceremony will find a place. I have on some of these occasions spoken to you very frankly. You have not resented it, and I know that you will not resent anything that I may say to you to-day because I think by this time you are fully aware that in speaking I am actuated by only one motive, and that is, a desire to do anything I can to promote the welfare of the people. Last year I sounded a note of warning ; to-day I am going to make an appeal. A year ago I pointed out to you that the forces of the two arch-enemies of the Church and State, Atheism and Anarchy, were very active throughout the civilized world and that their activity had caused direful calamity to many countries, and I said that though it might seem that Malta was very far off from any danger of such calamities occurring to her, yet no country could expect to be altogether or indefinitely immune. A year has passed and it may seem to you that my warning was quite unnecessary or, at any rate, premature. During the past year the outrages, murders and deeds of violence, have, if not altogether ceased in some countries, at any rate, very much decreased. It may be said that the "reign of terror" has, for a time, ceased, but the danger is not over. Other methods are being employed. Endeavours are being made to poison the minds of men and women, especially of the younger generation, by instilling into them doctrines which comprise a

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denial of God, the destruction of His Churches, and the institution of an authority based solely on self, self-advancement and self-enrichment. Even so you may say that there is little fear of the people of these islands being infected by any such doctrines. That might be so were it not that you have in your midst an insidious enemy who is a powerful ally to the forces of evil, and that is Apathy. I am not saying that apathy is peculiar to these islands ; but it is certainly prevalent. It may sound a paradox to say that apathy, which is an element of weakness, is gaining in strength year by year, but it is true. It was not always so. Malta is proud of her history and she is particularly proud of the period which commenced nearly 400 years ago. There was no apathy then ; Malta could claim to be one of the "citadels of Christendom" and to have in her midst the personification of the Church Militant. Malta had leaders then ; she wants leaders now. As I visualize the situation it is this. The State will continue, as is her duty, to provide increasing facilities for education to the boys and girls in order that when they become men and women they will be equipped better than they are now to face the battle of life. There will then happen here what has happened in other countries, viz. that with the spread of education the people will turn and look for leaders. To whom will they turn ? Certainly, in the first instance, they will turn to the priests of their Church, the men vested with all the authority which their sacred office gives them, the men to whom from childhood they have been taught to look upon with reverence

TWO ROADS

and respect. Will they find in the priests of their Church men who by force of character, study and practical knowledge are in every way qualified to be guides, counsellors and friends to them in all that affects their material as well as their spiritual welfare? If they do, all will be well, but if they do not, one of two things will happen. Either they will not seek the advice of their priests at all, or they will seek it on spiritual matters only, and then in their minds spiritual matters will be dissociated altogether from material ones and will cease thereby to be what they ought to be, the guiding principle of their lives.

“ ‘ And then will come the commencement of the waning of the influence of the Church and the deterioration of the character of the people. They may come swiftly ; they may come slowly, but they will surely come. It seems to me that the people of these islands will soon approach the “ parting of the ways.” When they come there they will see two roads : one pointing to service to God and service to man, and the other pointing to service of self. Which will they take ? We gladly recognize that some at any rate will take the former road ; we fear that some will take the latter. But which will the majority take ? That will depend on the men whom they have chosen as leaders before they reach the parting of the ways, and that choice will depend on whether the men who can and who should be leaders have qualified themselves for leadership. My appeal to you, as priests of the Church, is this. Spare no effort to qualify yourselves for leadership, throw off this apathy, come out into the open,

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be once more a Church Militant ; but do not stand aloof from the good men and women of the laity. Join with them, work with them, if necessary fight with them, for a cause which is worth working for, worth fighting for, to ensure that the people for whom you are responsible take and keep as the guiding principle of their lives service to God and service to man. I have spoken to you strongly, but I feel strongly. I can assure you that long after we leave Malta, my wife and I will continue to take the deepest interest in the people of these islands and in their progress, and our earnest hope is that that progress will be upward and not downward.'

" The last of the three speeches to which I have referred was addressed when he was about to leave the Island to the Students of the Malta University, of which he held the Honorary degree of LL.D. It was not the first occasion on which he had spoken to them and he was, I knew, respected and liked by them all. None the less, to address University students is not always an easy task. Reverence for vested authority is not a dominating characteristic of undergraduate audiences, and even other Universities than that of Malta are not without the experience of finding that there are usually some to whom the greater the importance of the occasion, the stronger proves the attraction of seeking entertainment from the embarrassment of the Speaker.

" There was, however, no need for apprehension. It was obvious after his opening words that there were none in his audience who did not feel that they were being addressed by a real friend, a

AT THE UNIVERSITY

member of their own University who desired to be reckoned as one of themselves. He spoke at some length with convincing earnestness and appeal, dwelling, as he so often did, on their opportunities for service and leadership, and the special obligations laid on them in those respects as members of the University.

"He concluded, with reference to remarks made by the Head of the University in his introductory speech, by expressing the hope that if he were remembered by them it might be not as Field-Marshal Lord Plumer or His Excellency the Governor, but as an Old Boy.

"No one who was present is likely to forget either his words or the demonstration of affection which followed.

"It is not infrequent in any garrison town to find that difficulties arise through lack of sympathy between the civil and military administration and even between the soldier and civilian. The fact that in the case of Malta there are racial differences, and that besides being a Fortress, the Island is an important Naval base, makes the maintenance of sympathetic relations, social as well as administrative, of additional importance. To secure this was an object which Lord Plumer quietly and unostentatiously kept always before him, constantly getting people together in the Palace or the University to hear lectures or talks on their experiences or on current events by civilians as well as officers of both services, or distinguished visitors, fostering common interest in the antiquities and archæology of the Island, and generally encouraging social intercourse.

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“ Very early he instituted a weekly conference of the principal members of his Staff, which was attended by representatives of the Navy as well as of the Civil Administration. At the Conferences there were discussed not merely matters of purely military importance, but also questions in which the other services might be concerned or in which he wished them to be interested. The Conference was maintained during the whole period of his administration, forestalled tedious discussion and difficulties and was greatly appreciated by all services.

“ Always anxious that his officers should keep in touch with events abroad, it was his practice to read at the Conference extracts from letters sent to him by friends who held commands in various parts of the Empire descriptive of the situations which they had to face and the means which they adopted to deal with their difficulties. Loyal always to his friends, he certainly inspired them with his own enthusiasm, as their correspondence was sustained and formed most valuable commentaries on events of public interest and importance.

“ I remember the particular pleasure which it gave him to be able to read to us accounts from his former Chief of Staff, General Harington, who was then in Command at Constantinople and faced with a difficult situation. I also remember the delight and satisfaction it gave him when the opportunity arose of giving assistance. There were then two battalions only of Regular Infantry in Malta, but at the first intimation that additional troops would be welcome, both were dispatched

THE NEW CONSTITUTION

immediately in the aircraft carrier *Eagle* to Constantinople.

“Two years after his appointment as Governor the Royal Assent was given to a new form of Constitution which provided for more complete control of their own affairs by the Maltese than had been possible under any of the Constitutions previously in force. In the long and careful discussions which preceded its introduction the Field-Marshal took part, and the intimate acquaintance which he had gained with conditions and opinions in the Island gave weight and authority to his views.

“The new Constitution added materially to the responsibilities and duties of the Governor. Malta being at once an Empire Fortress, as well as a Naval and Air Base, there were many matters with which the local authorities were not qualified to deal, concerning which, nevertheless, legal enactments were from time to time required. The Royal Letters Patent reserved these matters for administration by a separate authority to be known as The Malta Imperial Government, consisting of the Senior Officers of the Royal Navy the Army, and the Air Force, the Lieutenant-Governor, the Legal Adviser to the Governor, with the Governor as President.

“Malta affairs proper were to be dealt with by the Malta Government, consisting of an elected Assembly, and a Senate elected partly by general suffrage, and partly by separate bodies—the University, the Nobility and the Trade Union Council, with two nominated by the Archbishop. There were twenty official members as formerly,

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and the charge of Departmental Administration was placed in the hands of Ministers appointed by the Governor from members of either House. Executive authority rested with the Executive Council consisting of the Ministers, with the Governor as President.

“ Provision was also made for the summoning of a Privy Council, consisting of the Ministers and the members of the Malta Imperial Government, sitting together under the Presidency of the Governor, when questions arose which concerned the interests of both Governments.

“ With many of the matters reserved for control by the Malta Imperial Government, Lord Plumer as Commander-in-Chief had familiar acquaintance : he had, moreover, as members of that Government, officers with technical experience.

“ Conditions were not similar in the case of the Malta Government. Before the New Constitution became operative the Governor was in a position before arriving at a decision in Executive Council to take advantage of the advice of the technical Heads of Departments who were members of that Council, or of the Lieutenant-Governor, to whom, indeed, he might hand over matters of minor importance. But when the new Malta Government came into being it became necessary for Lord Plumer to preside alone over an Executive Council composed of Ministers only, without previous experience of Departmental Administration who must sometimes themselves have difficulty in either forming an opinion or advising, yet might naturally wish to avoid the necessity of having to defend themselves before the House

DUTY AND PLEASURE

or the Electorate against any charge of undue submission to dictation. It is a commonplace to say of Lord Plumer that he never gave a decision without a thorough understanding of the question at issue, and the knowledge which he had already gained of the working of Civil Government Departments was of great advantage both to him and to his ministers. He was fortunate in having Ministers whom he could—and did—inspire with his sense of the special obligation laid on leaders to give service to the State.

“For Lord Plumer his duty became actually and literally his pleasure, and realization of this, with his cheerful fearlessness, his never-failing help and sympathy won for him the confidence and affection of his Ministers and the Country.

“With unerring judgment of men, the Field-Marshal had a notable gift of securing the men he wanted for particular duties. Those selected quickly learnt two things, first that they must give of their best, and next that they had a leader who would support them, while they did so, through thick and thin. No one realized more clearly than he how much the success of a Commander turns on his being able to depend on his Staff, nor did he forget as Governor of Malta what he had so often proved as a soldier in the Field. One example will suffice. He found on arrival that the Civil Police were discontented, and that discipline and efficiency left something to be desired. Deciding that drastic changes and improvements were required before there could be hope of converting them into a disciplined or useful force, he secured the appointment of a

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chief on whose courage, judgment and tact he could place reliance, and once satisfied of that left the task of reorganization to him, content to keep touch with progress. The result justified his confidence. In little over a year Malta had a smart and efficient and contented Police Force.

"Of military matters, I am not competent to speak, but I could not but be impressed with his determination in carrying through measures which he had decided would make for increased efficiency—such as the reconstitution of the local forces—or would further progress or development—as in the case of the establishment of the air station at Calafrana. Here there was opposition to be met from the farmers, who disliked, very naturally, to be obliged to part with their fields—opposition which his personal influence did much to overcome.

"It seemed as time went on that there was no one in the Island who failed to recognize his single-minded honesty of purpose, or believe that his actions or projects, even if not equally pleasing to all, were inspired by his constant desire to secure their welfare. When he finally left Malta on the completion of his term of office, all parts and classes of the country were represented in the vast sorrowing crowds that thronged Valletta, the Harbour and even the sea. A marvellous tribute of esteem and affection without parallel in the history of the Island."

This is perhaps a suitable place to include an impression of Lord Plumer at Malta from the naval point of view.

Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher, G.C.B., C.V.O.,
Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean and

SIR JOHN DE ROBECK

who was Chief of Staff to Admiral Sir John de Robeck in Malta at the time when Lord Plumer was Governor has kindly given me the following which I include :

“ When I think of Lord Plumer at Malta I think of him most often in the centre of a gathering at the Custom House to say good-bye to my chief, Sir John de Robeck, when he relinquished command of the Mediterranean Fleet in 1922.

“ Sir John had shaken hands with a great number arranged in a semicircle and finally turned towards the Field-Marshal. Together they walked with right hands locked, wordless but understanding, to the Admiral's barge. It was plain that each felt acutely this good-bye as indeed did all who saw it. A little later, as the Flagship left harbour, the Fortress fired a last salute. It had been Lord Plumer's practice to order a gun salute whenever the Naval Commander-in-Chief left Malta for a cruise and the Fleet appreciated to the full this unusual compliment, for they saw in it not a mere act of courtesy but something far deeper between the Field-Marshal and the Admiral, between the Army and the Navy.

“ It was the common experience of us all to feel that though of a different Service we were, in his eyes, one in the Service of the King. Where, however, Service rivalry had no public significance, Service loyalty was very properly manifest. It was a serious business if the Navy chanced to win at polo or cricket and that was all to the good of both games at Malta.

“ We sailors could not know of more than a fraction of what Lord Plumer did at Malta, yet

MALTA

we were often amazed at a sense of duty which gave him no rest at all. One night my wife and I were dining at San Antonio Palace and it fell to us to be the first to say good night after dinner. We thought the Field-Marshal looked tired and that it would be kind not to stay late. This proceeding found no favour, no favour at all, nor could the true explanation be given and the mistake was never repeated. The Plumers could never be tired and were never tired in the performance of duty or the doing of kindness and that sums up the impression I have in my mind of them both and was the secret of the deep affection and respect they inspired in all with whom they had to do."

The Times of 19th May, 1924, in a leading article paid a fitting tribute to Lord Plumer's Governorship of Malta on his return to England as having been conspicuously sound and successful. As has been pointed out by Sir William Robertson, he took over Malta at a very difficult time, but by firmness, tact and a very remarkable industry Lord Plumer gradually allayed the prevailing discontent.

After describing the way in which he introduced the new Constitution and other matters for the improvement of the Colony, *The Times* says very truly :

" Whatever he has done has been accomplished without display or advertisement : yet he has kept throughout as firm and as sure a control as that which made his Command of the Second Army so famous in the later stages of the War. It should be a great satisfaction to him, now that

A FIELD-MARSHAL

he returns to this country, to realize that he has deserved well of his Country in peace as in War, and that the same islanders who viewed his coming with surly hostility have genuinely and openly expressed regret for his departure."

To Lady Plumer I am indebted for the following account of their social and other activities at Malta :

"We loved the Palace in Valletta. It is really beautiful with its corridors with men in armour. The small drawing-room hung with crimson brocade has some nice pictures, the ball-room and the other drawing-rooms are most attractive and of course the Armoury and the tapestries in the Council Chamber are unique. At the end of June we moved out of Valletta to Verdallo. It is high up and has such thick walls that the Palace is never hot.

"In August Mr. and Mrs. Amery arrived to stay and a good deal of work was done. All the charitable institutions and schools of all kinds had to be visited. It was hard work but well worth while. In August, 1919, Herbert received the patent of his Peerage and he was also made a Field-Marshal, an honour which he valued greatly."

In January, 1920, the first wedding that had ever taken place from the Palace in Valletta was celebrated. His youngest daughter married his A.D.C.

On 18th June, 1920, he told the Assembly how generous and liberal he considered the terms of the Constitution which he was going to lay on the

MALTA

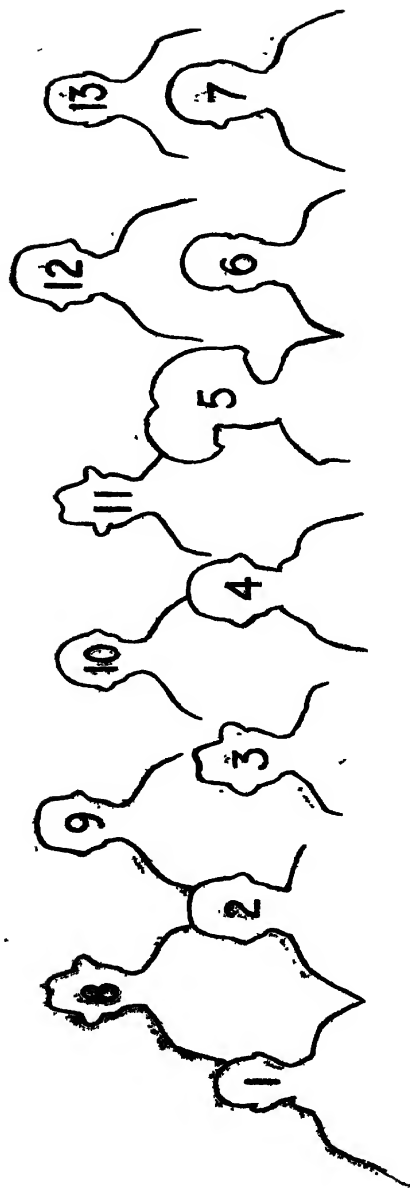
table. He then read the dispatch. In the afternoon they left Malta in the *Hussar*, the Admiral's yacht which Sir John de Robeck most kindly put at the disposal of the Governor. Captain Barrow was the Commander and they had a lovely holiday in and around the Greek Isles. Lady Plumer writes :

" We went first to Piraeus and afterwards we anchored in Phaleron Bay. We did the usual sightseeing and then passed through the Corinth Canal and visited Old Corinth, Delphi, Corfu, etc., and got back to Syracuse on the 29th June and to Malta on 3rd July."

In the summer of 1921 they went to England. Lord Plumer had to undergo a serious operation. It was, however, wonderfully successful and they returned to Malta in September.

In November, 1921, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales opened the Maltese Parliament, giving them self-Government. He stayed two days, attended various luncheons and dinners, a dance at the Palace, a polo match and Gymkhana.

" In February, 1922, Sir John de Robeck," Lady Plumer writes, " lent us his yacht, the *Surprise*, to take us to Palermo where we spent a most delightful ten days. On the 10th September the Admiral again lent us his yacht, this time the *Bryony*. We arrived off Cape Helles on the 13th and landed. We walked up to the first ridge, where Doughty Wyllly fell and which is called after him. It was all very sad and depressing. We returned to the yacht and went up the Straits in her as far as Chanak. Colonel Hughes, in charge of the War Graves, met us at Kalid



1. Lt.-Col. R. F. GUY
2. Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey
3. H.E.
4. H.R.H.
5. The Lady Plumer

6. Admiral Sir John de Robeck
7. Major R. W. Mellard
8. Col. A. E. Ellershaw
9. Lt.-Cmdr. Hugh Boulby

10. Comm. de Burgh
11. Col. Vawdrey
12. Capt. Bruce Ogiby
13. Capt. Martin Gubbins

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"We went first to Piraeus and afterwards we anchored in Phaleron Bay. We did the usual sightseeing and then passed through the Corinth Canal and visited Old Corinth, Delphi, Corfu, etc., and got back to Syracuse on the 20th June and to Malta on 3rd July."

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GROUP AT MALTA WITH H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

VISIT TO CONSTANTINOPLE

Bahr and showed us the cemeteries and the hill up which they dragged the naval guns and gave us a very interesting account of the operations. On the 14th we arrived at Constantinople at sunrise. General Harington came on board, very glad to see his old Chief. His first words were : ' The one person in the world I most wished to see at the present time.' We had a wonderful time sightseeing, but Herbert spent most of his time at the office with General Harington as the situation was very difficult at that time. We stayed a few days at Therapia with the Haringtons and left in the *Bryony* on the night of the 19th September. We then went to Naples and Torrento and back to Malta."

Early in November the late Sultan of Turkey, whose life was in danger, applied to the British Government for protection. He was removed secretly from Yildiz Palace by General Harington and transferred in H.M.S. *Malaya* to Malta, where he was accommodated for some little time before proceeding to Mecca. He died subsequently at San Remo.

Early in the spring of 1923 the Crown Prince of Japan (the present Emperor) began his European tour by landing in Malta. As it was the first time he had visited Europe everything was new to him.

On his arrival there was a reception at the Palace at Valletta. He went to the Opera and the opera singers came to San Antonio Palace where he dined one night to sing to him again. He came to a garden-party and planted a tree and was, Lady Plumer says, a most kind and appreciative guest.

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Early in the spring of 1923 Queen Marie of Roumania visited Malta. She stayed at Admiralty House with Admiral Sir O. and Lady Brock.

Queen Marie, having spent a good deal of her childhood at Malta when the Duke of Edinburgh was Commander-in-Chief, was most anxious to revisit all the places she knew, especially San Antonio Palace.

The last few months of Lord Plumer's time in Malta were taken up with the preparation for the Wembley Exhibition at which Malta was given a Pavilion, which was divided into three parts—the Prehistoric, arranged by Professor Zammit—Malta at the time of the Knights of St. John and the Grand Masters—and Malta at the present day.

On 16th May, 1924, the five years as Governor were completed and I have heard from many sources that it would be difficult to imagine a more wonderful farewell than was given to the Field-Marshal and his wife.

It is evident that his administration of Malta had won the approval of His Majesty's Government because in November of the same year, 1923, Mr Amery, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, asked him if he would consider going to Palestine. It was not an easy question to decide. He was then sixty-eight and the War had taken its toll on him.

While the question was still in abeyance the offer of Governor-General of Australia was made. It touched him very much, for the bravery of the Australian troops not only in the late War but also when they were with him in South Africa, appealed very strongly to him. He had to refuse for financial reasons. He was again asked to reconsider his decision but was unable to do so.

A FATEFUL DECISION

In January, 1924, they paid a visit to the Balearic Islands, returning by Barcelona and Madrid, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

On their return the fateful decision of going to Palestine was made.

CHAPTER XV

IMPRESSIONS BY BISHOP GWYNNE

LEST my readers should think that the picture I have presented of my old Chief is biassed after my long and happy association with him I have asked others who knew him well and who knew him in a different capacity, to give me their impressions from a completely different angle. To Dr. Gwynne, Bishop of Khartoum, I am indebted for the following reminiscences :

“ The first time I ever saw Lord Plumer was in 1915 when I was Deputy Chaplain-General in France. The responsibility was heavy for one who had no official connection with the Army before the War. Finding myself in the Second Army area I went direct to the General, as a well-known supporter of the Chaplains' Department. With characteristic good humour on my approaching as a novice in military ways, coming to one who was an expert, he asked, ‘ Have you come to borrow money ? ’ His transparent kindness and goodness attracted me at once and I was soon convinced that he would give me good counsel and advice. As a matter of fact he promised his help at once, but on a condition. It was to remove an experienced worn-out chaplain from the General's army to the Base. I knew it would

THE CHAPLAINS' DEPARTMENT

need very delicate handling and hesitated, stammering out 'whether I could say it was the Army Commander's wish'? 'Of course you can—I meant that,' he answered. The rest was plain sailing, and the senior chaplain, though sorry to leave the front, felt that the General was thinking of his welfare as much as anything.

"The General kept his part of the bargain right loyally and from that day until the end of the War, any success in the organization of the Chaplains' Department was due to him and General Horne, the Commander of the First Army. He combined a sympathy and a tenderness with great courage and power of will. By placing himself alongside the chaplain he sensed the extreme difficulty of his work in such a war. Being a deeply religious man himself, he knew that for reinforcement of nerve power and endurance there was nothing that kept up the hearts of men so much as religion. As the great struggle became more and more intense a high degree of efficiency was necessary to match the scientific warfare of the adversary schools, for almost every arm of warfare were provided at the back of the army areas, such as machine gun, wire entanglement, and bombing schools. It occurred to me that while combatants were brought back for refresher courses, it would be beneficial for the chaplains to have a place where they might have special instruction and deepening of spiritual life for their difficult task of ministering to the troops. I took my brain wave to Cassel, the Headquarters of General Plumer, and released it over my cup of tea. Tim Harington, now His Excellency, the

IMPRESSIONS BY BISHOP GWYNNE

Governor of Gibraltar, was there at the time. 'Well, what can I do for you now?' asked the Army Commander. 'A bombing school for the chaplains.' 'A what?' On my repeating my request he chuckled with laughter, saying, 'Surely you don't want the chaplains bombed?' When I explained how necessary it was to bring back the chaplains for 'a spiritual gingering up' and that I had just the man to take charge of such a school, he asked a few questions, was silent for a few minutes, then suddenly blurted out, 'I think it is a good scheme. I'll give you a chateau in my area.' He did, and in a short time after that we had a beautiful chateau with extensive grounds, under a great religious leader, and beds for twenty chaplains. During the courses which lasted a week we always tried to get a layman to lecture on the work of chaplains, and succeeded after great difficulty in persuading the Army Commander to address the school. When he addressed chaplains at his own Headquarters he would not allow Tim Harington or myself into the room, but when he spoke at the Chaplains' School I heard two of his addresses. They were most practical and witty—one or two of the points I remember to this day. 'Identify yourself with your Units as much as possible, do what they do. If you can play games play with them, march when they march—make them your friends and let them feel you are their own padre.' About preaching to soldiers he gave sound advice: 'Prepare carefully, give of your best, for congregations in the Field are paraded to attend. Be brief. Tell them at the start what your message

NO MORE LECTURES

is about and stick to the point, prepare well the prayers, put yourselves in their place and ask yourselves what would help most and what they would like you to ask for them.'

"He had a senior chaplain at Cassel who was most energetic in getting cinemas, entertainments, and lectures for the troops. All this pleased the General greatly, but 'Why don't you provide lectures for my Headquarters? We have often a monotonous time and need cheering up quite as much as others.' So an Oxford lecturer came after a visit to Russia; he brought down the house and raised up the spirits of his hearers by prophesying that 'the steam roller' (Russia) with her exhaustless supplies of men was soon to appear in the East and roll over the enemy forces. A few days later there came the news of the revolution in Russia, a subject dropped from the list ever after by the lecturer.

"On another occasion a Scottish divine, having visited Italy, delivered a most inspiring lecture, stating that the spirit of the old Roman was still alive and deeds of daring which compared favourably with the heroism of their forefathers were performed by the Italians against Austria. Alas, soon after, news of the defeat of Cadorna at Caporetto and the surrender of a hundred thousand Italians reached the western front. 'Look here,' said General Plumer to his senior chaplain, with a humourous glint in his eye, 'no more lectures here.' 'Any lecture on France is to be banned.' So far all our hopes have 'been dashed to the ground.' The lectures were discontinued.

"In the fighting round Ypres our casualties

IMPRESSIONS BY BISHOP GWYNNE

were heavy in 1917 and during that winter our men suffered terribly. Instances of his affection and sympathy are many; one will suffice. A small company of a well-known Battalion with two junior officers were marching along the Menin Road—mud-stained, worn out and fed up. The car had stopped and the Army Commander stood by the cobbled roadside to let them pass. He motioned them to halt, calling out the officer in charge—a young officer came forward and saluted. ‘Please tell your Colonel that his Battalion is to be congratulated on the magnificent behaviour of all ranks—you have upheld the best traditions of the British Army.’ The troops marched on, heartened and inspired from the cheering words of the dear old General.

“The taking of Inverness Copse, which was a key position and overlooked our lines—after more than one expensive attempt—was an occasion which brought a thrill of cheer along the whole line, the more so as it was achieved at small cost. When congratulated, the Army Commander in his own self-effacing way sent me off to Tim Harington, saying, ‘Congratulate the Staff, not me.’ On repeating this to Tim, I received the answer, ‘Just like him. Of course the Chief is responsible for the whole thing.’ It was that spirit which made his Headquarters a band of brothers and assisted in the success of his army.

“A Battalion of Australians, marching north on a dark night, was asked by a soldier, ‘Where are you off to, Aussi?’ One of the Australians shouted back, ‘We don’t know where, but thank God we are going back to Daddy Plumer’s army.’

AFTER CAPORETTO

Twice before the Australians had done well, with small loss, and they remembered.

"After the disaster of Caporetto, French and British troops were dispatched to Italy; Lord Plumer was in charge of the British contingent. So disheartened were some of the inhabitants that communists threw leaflets into the railway carriages filled with British troops on their arrival at Turin. Indeed, even when our troops were in position on the Asiago Pass, it was doubted whether even Venice could be saved. The firm declaration of the British Commander to hold on at all costs, and the resolve of the French Commander to do the same calmed the wavering spirits of the Italians, who fought with great tenacity until the end.

"Wrapped up in that little commander with the face of a child was an unflinching heart of steel. He saw his duty clear and never heeded any other counsel. Cowper described him well :

" ' He holds no parley with unmanly fears
Where duty calls he confidently steers
Faces a thousand dangers at her call
And, trusting in his God, surmounts them all.' "

"At Cologne Lord Plumer commanded the troops. I stayed with him more than once. Never in history was a garrison occupying enemy country so well behaved and courteous. They were started well under Plumer. Many were the stories of how our officers and men adopted an unbending attitude towards their former enemies. They felt that the war was unnecessary and their comrades slain in a conflict not of our starting.

IMPRESSIONS BY BISHOP GWYNNE

But it did not last long ; they could not—did not ‘ strike when a man was down.’ A padre told me how for days he walked in and out of his billet without exchanging a word and half a frown when he met his unwilling host on the stairs. He heard children’s voices which reminded him of his own, and one morning as he was making for the door a little child ran out and tugged his coat. He held out no longer, lifting the child up he handed him back to the hostess ; they laughed at each other and he felt a Christian again.

“ Lord Plumer took me to the opera. Some hundreds of seats were commandeered for British troops. Between scenes he took me to the spacious circular terrace, where crowds of British and Germans walked up and down, ignoring each other entirely. ‘ There,’ he said, ‘ you will remember that all your life, a proud race conquered and a better race knowing how to bear themselves as conquerors. That aloofness will not last long,’ and he himself with his Christian Ideal ever before him followed that from the first.

“ He was so fond of a joke, and I loved to hear him laugh at anything amusing I took to him. Walking by the Rhine before breakfast, I saw a disconsolate lonely soldier, leaning over the parapet. I stopped beside him, passing the time of day ; in response he blurted out, ‘ I’m a b——y fool—I am.’ Inquiring the cause of this self-disparagement, he told me that the day before an officer with a notebook walked down the ranks, asking each his occupation before he joined. ‘ I said ‘awker, but my mate, a ‘awker like me and lives next door at ‘ome, said market gardener.

'E's on his way to England, 'e is. Oh, I'm a b——y fool, I am.'

"The next visit I paid Cologne was to bring the Archbishop of Canterbury—a great friend of the General's. No fewer than twenty-nine Generals were brought together to meet the Archbishop in Conference to suggest ways of helping men in their religious life after the War. We had held these conferences in France on the way, and the peaceful Archbishop, faced with this stern formidable audience, looked towards me to thaw the ice. So I started off by quoting a sarcastic remark from an irate critic whom I had unconsciously touched on the raw. 'There are two great failures in this War—So-and-so's——macintosh and the Church of England.' The General as usual was splendid; he paid a great testimony to the work of the chaplains of all denominations, saying that their most difficult task had been performed with great credit. 'Very few soldiers,' he said, 'were unconscious of a Power not our own reinforcing our loss of nerve—inspiring us when we were in doubt—saving us from despair. Our enemy made few mistakes, but they never recovered from them; we made many more and we always recovered' we stand not in judgment on the cause of the War. We can but bow our heads. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us be the praise." Let the objective of the Church be to teach our generation and those who come after about God, what He is and how we can know Him and learn to do His will.'

"Another General criticized the machinery of the Church as out of date and not adapted to modern requirements. It had never been revised

IMPRESSIONS BY BISHOP GWYNNE

and was incapable of influencing all classes of the people of England.

“The Army Commander nodded assent and the Archbishop smiled when one of the company gave as his contribution the sound advice in military metaphor: ‘1. Move every parson every five years; 2. Enforce an annual report; 3. Enlarge the area of command; 4. Increase facilities for transport.’

“The Archbishop preached to the Headquarters Staff and other units. Well do I remember General Plumer sitting in the first row, his reverence during the service and his great attention. In the course of his sermon the Archbishop told of how all the really great and noble men that he had been privileged to meet had one unfailing characteristic—they had the sincerity and simplicity of little children. As he spoke I looked at the General looking up at the preacher, oblivious to the fact, as the Archbishop said himself, ‘Plumer himself was one of the best illustrations of his sermon.’ In voice, heart, and even in face, especially in his eyes, he had the sincerity, the simplicity of a child—qualifications which the Greatest Warrior of all stated were necessary to join His Kingdom. Never make the mistake that the sincerity and simplicity of men like Plumer means softness, indecision, weakness, or ignorance. He was from the same mould as Gordon. That great soldier seemed to the slave traffickers on the Upper Nile innocent and gentle as a child, until he saw the mutilated bodies of the slaves. Then his steel-blue eyes flashed forth in righteous anger which meant death.

TROUBLESOME ITALIANS

“ At Malta and Jerusalem, he displayed such consummate skill and wisdom as an administrator that his very presence brought a security and a confidence to those administered which was truly remarkable. One can only give instances, samples of his methods of administering, which proved so effective. In Malta there always has been an Italian party, small, insignificant, noisy and troublesome. The Pope and Mussolini were not ignorant of their worthlessness. As soon as a new Governor arrives they make themselves a nuisance. The new Governor, with the directness of a soldier, sent for a few of the leaders and with the apparent innocence of a new-comer asked them to express their views as honest upright men seeking the common weal of the whole population of the Island. If the British Government which he represented were approached by disinterested patriots with serious proposals, he assured them their proposals would be listened to with attention. They put forward outrageous claims and demands, which they knew to be preposterous. Putting his eye-glass on a twinkling eye, with a wise smile, he said, ‘Gentlemen, I have heard what you have to say about yourselves and your proposals: put them on paper and sign them with all your names. I can assure you the document shall receive every attention.’ He was never seriously troubled again, and nowhere was his wisdom and judgment in administering a country of Roman Catholics more appreciated than in Rome.

“ At Jerusalem he was called upon to tackle perhaps the most thorny question then causing

anxiety to the British Government. Sir Herbert Samuel had been fair and just, but, being himself a Hebrew, he was suspect by Christians and Moslems alike. As successor to Sir Herbert Samuel there could not have been a better appointment than Lord Plumer. The Arabs of Palestine were angry at the declaration of the British Government that their country was to be handed over to the Jews as a National Home, a declaration which some people to this day believe to be a grave mistake. It alienated the very Moslems who had looked on England as their friend. No Jewish administrator, however wise, could succeed in winning their confidence or overcoming their prejudice. This was the first task the new High Commissioner has to undertake. Like a true tactician, he left severely alone the important section of the population who had refused to take any part in the administration and remained sullen and aloof.

“Hearing what kind of a man he was, and no doubt fearing him as a soldier, they requested an interview. After listening to the delegation, he rebuked them for their childish behaviour by sulking and abstaining from voting. To which they explained ‘as the British Government had made Palestine a National Home for Jews, what was the use?’ It was then he showed his tact and judgment, ‘You foolish people, do you think that I as a Christian am not at home in this Holy Land, with all the great memories of the Founder of our faith? And if you, with all the traditions of your religion, do not intend to keep this country as your home after a residence of hundreds of

THE CONFIDENCE OF ALL PARTIES

years, I cannot help you.' Surprised and astonished at this idea which was new to them, 'You cannot have three homes in one place,' they argued. 'Of course you can,' came the response, 'there is room for all and whoever shows himself a useful citizen, whether he is Moslem, a Christian or Jew, will be employed. Now go away and consider carefully what I say—if you are willing to assist, you will be welcome, but if you refuse, stand aside. Remember that whatever you decide I am determined to keep the peace at all costs.' In a few days they returned, saying they were willing to take their part in assisting the Government.

"He won the confidence of all parties in a remarkably short time; at the same time he kept them well in hand, never showing any fear or weakness. On the occasion of the laying of the foundation-stone of a new building in connection with the Bible Society, some fanatical Moslems threw stones. Next day the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, the head of the Moslems, was called to Government House. Lord Plumer then reprimanded him for the insult shown by his people to the Christian faith. When the Mufti disclaimed all responsibility, he was told plainly, 'Very well, then, any more stones thrown by your people at a religious ceremony and I will appoint a new Mufti.' 'You cannot do that, it is impossible.' 'Can't I? I warn you. Now go away.' Needless to say there was no more stone throwing. Had there been, there would have been a new Mufti.

"Plumer paid a short visit to Khartoum, as

IMPRESSIONS BY BISHOP GWYNNE

the guest of Sir John Maffey, before he retired to England. Having taken part as a young soldier with his Regiment in the expedition for the relief of Gordon in 1884, he was thrilled with everything he saw. He gave an address on Gordon to the Supper Club on a Sunday night after service. His admiration for Gordon was unbounded ; he thought him a man called out by God to do a great work for the Sudan, and was faithful unto death. Subsequent events showed that Gordon by sacrificing himself at Khartoum did more for the people of the Sudan than if he had been saved. He was one of those of whom it may be said, ' his death was no death—for he already began to live that other world life while still on earth.'

" He was of the same make-up as Gordon—the same simplicity and sincerity—the same in his love for humanity—the same in his humility—in his gentleness and in his unbending strength of will when once he was convinced where his duty lay.

" The last time I saw him to speak to was in his home in London a year before he died. He could only just get up from a chair and move to the luncheon-table. He was as cheery as ever and full of fun. ' The doctor tells me that I am eighty-six although I am only seventy-six. That comes, he says, from not resting after the War. How could I ? I couldn't refuse to go to Cologne or Malta or Jerusalem. They persuaded me it was my duty—and now the doctor tells me I've given ten years more for my country—and haven't any more. No complaints,' the great Field-Marshal and the simple soldier added and laughed.

CROSSING THE BAR

“ Once more I saw him, lying like a tired child, unconscious. That small frail body, loath to part with so heroic a soul, clung on to life. And he, like some great ship outward bound, was gradually slipping the moorings, the gallant commander, the faithful friend, the wise administrator, the simple soldier, the stern warrior who launched his legions with terrific force and sound judgment against the enemy, the reconciler who after the War won the confidence of those same enemies, and the simple Christian, quietly crossed the bar to the great ocean of eternity, equipped and commissioned for Higher Service. What Tennyson wrote of his friend, Arthur Hallam, is true of Lord Plumer :

“ ‘ For doubtless unto Thee is given
A life that bears eternal fruit
In those vast offices that suit
The full grown energies of Heaven.’ ”

CHAPTER XVI

HIS VISIT TO CONSTANTINOPLE

I AM diffident in making any allusion to anything with which I was personally connected, but I must ask my readers to pardon me for telling the following incident. I do so as it was so characteristic of the man.

I was in command of the Allied Forces of occupation in Turkey and was in Constantinople from 1920 to 1923. In 1922 the Greeks were routed by the Turks out of Anatolia and our small detachment of one battalion of the Loyal Regiment at Chanak found themselves in a serious position, as they were threatened by the victorious Turks, and it looked as if it might be necessary to withdraw them from the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles. It is true to say that the French and Italian Governments had refused to allow their troops, which were under my command, to be employed on the Asiatic side and I had not so employed them. At the same time it is only right to say that in the spring of 1922, the Greeks under General Hadjianestes had drafted a large number of troops from Anatolia to Eastern Thrace and were definitely threatening Constantinople. To meet this I had placed nearly all the troops I had under General Charpy to defend the famous Chatalga Lines. The attack never materialized. It was in return for this that when Chanali was

AT CHANAK

threatened that I asked both the French and Italian High Commissioners if a small body of French and Italian troops—a company of French and a platoon of Italian—could be sent to Chanak in order that we might show the three Flags, French, Italian and British, as I thought that this would deter the Turks. The French and Italian High Commissioners and Generals readily agreed and these detachments duly arrived and were received by Brigadier Shuttleworth, who was in command at Chanak at the time. I may add that it was just about this time that Admiral (now Sir John) Kelly arrived in H.M.S. *Benbow* and landed nearly all his ship's company to help to wire in the little garrison at Chanak. For some time past Lord and Lady Plumer had been trying to come from Malta to pay us a visit at Constantinople, but their visit had had to be postponed. Imagine my delight when I heard that they were coming up at once in H.M.S. *Bryony*. The first reason for telling this story is that Lord Plumer, on arrival at Chanak, sent for my Commander, Brigadier Shuttleworth. He got the exact situation from him and sent me a personal wire to say that everything was all right. It was just characteristic of the hope and cheerfulness which I had so often seen him extend to others in the Ypres Salient. Next morning he arrived at Constantinople, and how glad I was to greet him, especially at that moment when things were not too good. I may add that I had wired to the War Office the day before to say that I would ask him to report his views on arrival. He came to my office and sat down at a table at the far end of the room. I gave him a copy of all the telegrams which I had sent and a copy of all the orders

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which I had issued. After about half an hour he said, 'Give me some foolscap paper.' He then proceeded to draft two telegrams, one to Mr. Lloyd George who was then Prime Minister, the other to the Secretary of State for War. He then got up and threw them on to my table saying, "Send those off." They were two very wonderful telegrams. I only wish I had copies, but I burnt every document I had the night before I left Constantinople so that I could never write a book. I have seen too many soldiers ruined by so doing. In an earlier chapter I described the interview on 21st March, 1918, between Generals Haig and Plumer and pictured the older doing his best to help the younger. Here was the same great man, then Governor of Malta, doing his best to help his old Staff Officer. I, alone, can know what his help and what his presence meant to me at that moment. It could not be measured in Divisions. I was fully aware that I was a very junior and inexperienced commander to be entrusted with the handling of such a delicate situation as existed at that time and which, if mishandled, might very easily have involved us in another war and much loss of life. It was as a result of those telegrams that the Government decided to send large reinforcements of both Naval, Military and Air Forces by which alone war was averted. It was whilst Lord Plumer was staying with me that the French and Italian Governments ordered their detachments to be withdrawn from Anatolia, leaving us in a very precarious situation at Chanak. I well remember how upset my loyal colleagues, the French and Italian Generals—Charpy and Mombelli—were at having to break that news to me. They and their High Commissioners and Admirals

GIVING ALL

were all due to dine with us that night to meet Lord and Lady Plumer. They tried so hard to be excused as they felt their position acutely. I insisted on their coming and we had a very enjoyable evening at which Lord Plumer's personality was outstanding. He and Lady Plumer sailed that night for Malta. Soon after this orders were sent to Malta to send me reinforcements. That was enough for Lord Plumer. He just sent everyone he had. His Staff, his battalions, his gunners, his ordnance officers and his chaplains. He literally cleared out Malta. Never was such generous help given to anyone as was given by him to his old Staff Officer. I remember writing to tell him later that on examining the Army List I thought that he had kept one Chaplain behind!

I have related the above incident as showing his thoughtfulness for and generosity to others, especially when in trouble. In an earlier chapter I described how he offered Sir Douglas Haig twelve divisions from the Second Army on that fateful 21st March, 1918, and in the above case it is clear how he gave me just everything he had. His whole life was like that. He cared nothing for himself. He sought nothing except for those under him who served him well. He hated publicity. He much preferred to help everyone first and himself last. At our last Harvest Festival Service in our King's Chapel at Gibraltar I heard the Dean of Gibraltar—the Very Rev. W. Knight-Adkin—preach a magnificent sermon on the note of "Cheerfulness, Kindliness and a resolution to help others." I can think of no one to whom those words could apply better than to my old Chief. It was just his life and his religion. He,

HIS VISIT TO CONSTANTINOPLE

like many other of our great Commanders, was a deeply religious man. He had, in my opinion, many of the great qualities of Lord Roberts and Gordon.

CHAPTER XVII

PALESTINE

IT is difficult for me to present a picture of his work as High Commissioner in Palestine, as I never had the privilege of seeing him in that capacity, but I am greatly indebted to various Government officials, including Sir Stewart Symes, now Governor-General Sudan, Colonel Mavrogordato, who was Chief of the Constabulary, Mr. Norman Bentwich, who was Attorney-General in Palestine, Mr. E. Mills, and to others who have been good enough to send me valuable accounts of his work. I am sure my readers will detect, as I do, that clear vision, that sound judgment, that evenly balanced mind, that power of organization, that firm but kind hand, that simplicity and understanding, that I have tried to portray of him as a soldier.

Fairness, justice, the patience to hear and understand the other fellow's difficulties, are qualities which stand right out in his administration both of Malta and Palestine.

The following may be taken as a summary of his great work in Palestine:

Lord Plumer was appointed High Commissioner in Palestine in succession to Sir Herbert Samuel in August, 1925. He succeeded to a relatively peaceful Palestine, though the country was not without its problems. Some of these problems Lord Plumer had, in his usual thorough way, taken

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pains to study even before his arrival in Palestine, which had been delayed by illness ; for, on the afternoon of his arrival when he took the oath of office and conversed at length with the various officials present, he impressed one and all with his knowledge of local conditions.

Very shortly after his arrival Lord Plumer asked his Chief Secretary to sketch out a policy for him, and after careful study of it, he adopted it. The chief planks in this policy were quiet administrative reforms and encouragement of agriculture. The latter required money, which was lacking, as Palestine came into a phrase of Budgetary stringency, and Jewish funds were confined to Jewish needs, especially of an immigration a little in advance of the country's economic capacity. In one direction only—loans being out of the question—might an economy be effected, viz. in the cut of the Public Security forces. This was Lord Plumer's first big issue. The risks were patent, inherent, and aggravated by disturbances in Syria which culminated in the Druse revolt. The High Commissioner, characteristically, took these risks and, himself, worked out the plans for the absorption of the British Gendarmerie with the Civil Police, and the formation of the Transjordan Defence Force.

This scheme had two main purposes :

(1) To relieve the British taxpayer of the greater part of the small contribution which he still made to the cost of defence in Palestine.

(2) To secure a greater unity and simplicity in the organization of the forces of Public Security.

It was believed that no further need existed for any British Regiment to garrison the country ; and, further, that the 500—originally 700—British

WORTH A BATTALION

Gendarmes who had been raised in 1922 to supplement the Palestine Police Force were largely superfluous.

They had been maintained as a semi-military unit for four years, and had seldom been called upon to do anything but give moral support. At the same time the division of the Civil Forces in Palestine into Palestine Police and British Gendarmerie, each with a separate administration, was clearly wasteful. Further, the incidents of the wars between the Emir Ibn Saoud and the Hejaz Forces, on the one hand, and between the Syrian Government and the Druse insurgents on the other, indicated that the frontiers of Transjordan rather than Palestine required guard. Accordingly, as outlined above, the Palestine Police was reconstructed as the sole Civil Force, and a regular military force, styled the Transjordan Frontier Force, which was entirely independent of the Palestine Police, was created for service along the Eastern frontiers.

That the reduction of the Forces was somewhat premature was manifested by the events of the year that followed Lord Plumer's departure and Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State, took full responsibility for the mistake when Palestine was debated in Parliament in 1930. Lord Plumer's personality in the country, it has been said, was worth a battalion: and it was not sufficiently appreciated that, when he left the country, a battalion might be necessary to make up for him.

The peace of the country during Lord Plumer's régime—when Syria was almost in a blaze—was certainly affected by his understanding and by public confidence in him. When, on Lord Plumer's departure, the peace was broken, Lord

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Plumer was blamed for the state of the Defence Forces. But what was not brought out at the time was that when Lord Plumer pushed through a more economical scheme of local defence forces, he made it absolutely clear that military reinforcements—he detailed his actual requirements—would be necessary if at any time political feeling or the local situation became seriously disturbed. This point should be borne in mind, for one of the characteristics of the Field-Marshal was thoroughness and he never left things to chance. In this connection it may be mentioned that the High Commissioner was fond of repeating to his officers and the leaders of the various parties that the principle on which they should work was that which he had adopted during the War—"It is better to be certain than sorry."

Lord Plumer lost no time in getting into direct and personal touch with the population in the chief places of the districts and villages. He made short tours north and south, and wherever he went he would wear out his retinue by his indomitable energy. A fifteen-hour day was normal on these tours. He early visited Transjordan, and was at once on good terms with the Emir Abdulla who had the Arab respect for a great soldier. He early established, also, personal relations with the heads of the neighbouring territories; and in April Monsieur de Juvenal, the newly appointed High Commissioner for Syria, paid a visit to Jerusalem to set the outward seal on a happy accord with the neighbouring Mandatory State. That accord, despite protracted trouble with the Druses and rebel bands on the border, was steadily maintained.

When he had been in the country two months Lord Plumer issued a memorandum to the Admin-

DECLARATION OF POLICY

istration in which, after referring to the work of his predecessor in laying the stable foundations for the gradual development of the country, he emphasized that the stability of those foundations rested on a sense of security of life and property, confidence in the uprightness and integrity of the Administration and all its branches, and a just application of the resources of the country. He went on to point out the particular objectives at which the different Departments of the Government should aim, to give effect to these principles, sketching his policy as a General plans his operations in the field. He concluded that the general objective must be to mould the country on the highest traditions of the British Empire. That declaration of policy guided the High Commissioner for the three years of his office.

On his preliminary declaration of policy Lord Plumer emphasized that he would regard agriculture as the primary industry of the country. In pursuance of that policy he carried out two important administrative measures :

(1) The Headquarters of the Department, which had hitherto been placed in the pleasant seclusion of Mount Carmel, was moved to Jerusalem, so that it might be in closer contact with the heads of the Government.

(2) The project of the stud-farm, long contemplated, was realized, and an establishment, which was a model of its kind, was set up at Acre.

Legislation was introduced for the protection of agricultural tenants from summary eviction, and relief to the agricultural class was sought in measures of fiscal reform. Lord Plumer had pointed out in his declaration of policy that religious fervour and enthusiasm are an asset to

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any country, that they should always be supported, and that there was no reason why the diversity of religious faiths and denominations should present difficulties to the Administration. The policy should be to encourage religious matters which do not prejudice others, and to discourage those which might cause prejudice. His relations with the religious bodies were tranquil throughout. If the Jewish community after the departure of Sir Herbert Samuel was conscious of having lost an understanding friend, it was, on the other hand, gratefully conscious of having found in Lord Plumer a sympathetic head of the State who was determined to secure justice for all. To the Roman Church, which was inclined to look askance at the policy of the Mandatory in Palestine, Lord Plumer's record in Malta afforded a good approach, and it was looked on as a sign of grace that the "Churnagosque" services at St. George's (Anglican) Cathedral which had hitherto been held on two official occasions in the year, the anniversary of the Occupation of Jerusalem and the King's Birthday, and had been attended by members of all communities, were discontinued in their old form. Lord Plumer preferred denominational services and invited each community to hold its own celebration on these days, so that the grievance that Roman Catholic consuls and officials were induced to attend the Anglican Church was removed. To the Anglican Church Lord Plumer, as was to be expected, gave constant and devoted support; but he did not favour the policy of regarding it in any way as the representative church of the Mandatory. It was simply the Church of the Anglican Christians.

The period of economic difficulty and unemploy-

EMPLOYMENT FOR THE WORKLESS

ment, which was particularly felt among the Jewish section of the population, gave Lord Plumer the opportunity to prove the breadth of his sympathies and his extraordinary devotion to duty. He was moved by the hard position of these immigrants to the country and by the way in which both the Jewish Labour Associations collectively and the individuals who suffered met their trials; and he sought ways in which the State could come to their help. While it was impossible for the Government to take over any system of poor relief, what could be done and was done, was to expedite certain constructive works on the Government programme and to find employment for the workless on these enterprises. The principal outlet of this kind was the construction of roads; and several important projects were carried out. In addition, the Government started on the scheme of drainage of the Kishon marshes in the neighbourhood of the town of Haifa, supplementing the drainage work which had been undertaken by Jewish bodies in the same area. In this way it found employment for from a thousand to two thousand men during the most difficult period of the winter of 1927-8. He overbore all administrative delays of the Departments by his own personal authority.

The High Commissioner won the hearts of the Jewish population not simply by the initiation of these works, which they knew to be prompted directly by him, but by the evident concern which he had in their difficulties and the sympathy which he showed in approaching them. The people, whether Jews or Arabs came to look upon him as a benevolent father and Lord Plumer himself was sufficiently understanding to take

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advantage of this trait in a people who by centuries of heredity were accustomed to a patriarchal rule. Wherever there was distress or trouble amongst the population, whether Jews or Arabs, Lord Plumer made it his business to look into it himself and to direct Government measures of relief. Thus, when complete drought in the districts of Beersheba and Gaza in the early months of 1927 caused the total failure of the harvest and threatened the destruction of the cattle in the area, he addressed the Bedouin Sheikhs, undertook to carry out measures for saving their stock, and arranged for the transport of thousands of animals to the areas in the north which had not been affected.

When the earthquake in July, 1927, caused widespread damage and considerable loss of life, Lord Plumer shortened his holiday, being at the time in England, on leave, and returned to do whatever was possible for the relief of the sufferers. He paid constant visits to Nablus, Ramleh, Lydda, and the villages which had suffered most, and supervised personally the relief measures and the rebuilding, and saw to it that the refugee camps were erected without the delay that usually attends public works. He and Lady Plumer were themselves the victims of the earthquake, because the hospice on the Mount of Olives, which had been Government House since the Occupation, was partly a ruin and altogether uninhabitable, and they were forced to take temporary and unsuitable quarters in a small hospice between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. When the time came for a new residence to be selected for the High Commissioner, Lord Plumer in his characteristic, thoughtful way rejected any, however suitable it might be in other respects, that was situated at

THE CONSTITUTION OF TRANSJORDAN

some distance from the town. He said he remembered when he was a young subaltern the expense of having to drive a long distance when invited to dinner by the General or the Governor, and that he would be no party to imposing a similar expense on young and poorly paid officials in Palestine. It is probable that the heat and discomfort of the temporary residence Lord and Lady Plumer occupied after the earthquake was a contributory cause to the illnesses they both endured in their last year in Palestine.

The Treaty between H.M. Government and the Emir of Transjordan and the organic law establishing the Constitution of Transjordan, which had their inception before the High Commissioner assumed office, were at last signed, sealed, and published. The High Commissioner became High Commissioner for Transjordan by a separate Royal Warrant. The progress of the territory of Transjordan was steady and undisturbed during the period of three years. In his original declaration of policy Lord Plumer pointed out that security from internal disorder and external oppression must be a primary consideration of the Government in Transjordan, and that the representatives of the Mandatory Power must accept direct responsibility for that security both for the sake of Transjordan itself and on account of its position adjacent to Palestine. The end was steadily and successfully pursued.

It was a tribute to the moral authority of the representatives of the Mandatory in Transjordan that, while the sympathies of the great majority of the population were definitely with the parties fighting against the French, no serious breach of the obligations of neutrality and no disturbance

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of good relation occurred. Internally law and order were well maintained in Transjordan, and the only occasion of any unrest was in 1926 when the Bedouin around Petra had a skirmish with a part of the Arab Legion that was enforcing the payment of their taxes. The pettiness of this incident reflected the general tranquillity.

Lord Plumer showed himself a soldier in the directness of his mind and the firmness of his decision, but he was in no way a militarist, and he set himself to clear away the military almost entirely from Palestine. It was only in minor incidents that his military career was recalled. He attached to the celebration of Armistice Day an importance which it had not hitherto borne ; the anniversary was appointed as a Government holiday, and each religious community was invited to hold a religious celebration. On one of these Armistice Day anniversaries Lord Plumer wanted a salute to be fired. But it was found that the British forces had no gun in Palestine. There was, however, an old gun which had been given to the Moslem Ecclesiastical dignitaries for the purpose of firing at the opening and the closing of the Fast Day during the month of Ramadan. The use of this gun was obtained from the Mufti ; and Lord Plumer remarked that an English Field-Marshal had had to beg a Moslem Archbishop for the loan of a gun with which to mark the British deliverance of Palestine. It was appropriate that, during his three years of service, the War cemeteries of Palestine should be finally dedicated to their purpose. Field-Marshal Lord Allenby came out to grace that ceremony in May, 1927 ; and with him representatives of the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, whose

TWO FIELD-MARSHALS

troops had played an important part in the deliverance of Palestine from the Turks. The two Field-Mmarshals, standing at opposite ends of the Stone of Memorial at the ceremony of dedication, typified two pillars of duty. They represented the highest type of soldier who fights as a means of securing a more stable peace, and having secured it, devotes his powers to the well-being of the people. Lord Plumer was never tired of insisting with the English Official, the Arab, and the Jew that the primary need of the country was consolidation; and under his firm hand the country had three years in which that purpose was steadfastly pursued. Unmarked by any dramatic incident or by any striking new departure, the three years of Lord Plumer's High Commissionership witnessed the assertion of Palestine and Transjordan nationality laws, coinage, and postage stamps; the steady maintenance of public security in either territory; the uninterrupted prosecution in Palestine of the policy of establishing a Jewish National Home, which was marked, indeed, by the ebb and flow of the stream of immigration and capital, but, whether in weal or woe, received the sympathetic help of the Government; the development of the resources of the land and particularly of its primary agricultural interests; the encouragement of local self-governing institutions and the avoidance of national politics; the further reform of the fiscal system, and finally, the closer knitting of the ties between the territories of Palestine and Transjordan and between those territories and the British Empire.

Mr. Norman Bentwich, to whom I am deeply indebted and from whose book I have quoted

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extensively, has most aptly and happily prefaced his chapter on the three years of Lord Plumer's régime with a quotation from the Book of Judges, which reads " and the land had rest " and perhaps this may be subscribed here, as a fitting conclusion to this brief historical summary of what the great soldier-administrator did for Palestine.

But I cannot close this chapter without relating stories and incidents of his work in Palestine, illustrative of his kindness, his firmness, his readiness to accept responsibility and of the many qualities which endeared him to all who came in contact with him.

There is a story which tells of Lord Plumer's confidence in his own judgment, and readiness to accept responsibility. In connection with the reorganization of the Public Security Forces, a meeting was convened to decide certain action in regard to reorganization, at which Lord Plumer presided. He eventually came to a decision which involved an expenditure of about £30,000. He then instructed the officer in charge to proceed at once with the action necessary, and the officer rose to leave the room. The Treasurer, who was present, interposed and said that such expenditure required the approval of the Secretary of State. The Field-Marshal turned to the officer who was still there and said " What are you waiting for ? Go and do what I have told you to do. If the Secretary of State does not approve you shall have my personal cheque for £30,000." Needless to say the reorganization scheme was carried through and was approved by the Secretary of State.

It is related that one of the first impressions made by Lord Plumer on his arrival in Palestine was that of his simplicity. He and Lady Plumer

BEDRAGGLED KAWASSES

were received at the railway station at Jerusalem by the principal officials and other leading residents and their wives. The two gorgeously attired Kawasses attached to Government House were also in attendance, prepared with their staves of office to lead the new High Commissioner to his car and to his residence. As soon as Lord Plumer saw them and learnt their function he released them from duty, and the last that was seen of Lord and Lady Plumer that morning was their departure from the railway station in their car, followed by a hired car piled up with luggage on the top of which were perched disconsolately the two Kawasses with their fine feathers almost literally bedraggled. Never again were the Kawasses seen in personal attendance on a High Commissioner. On great occasions they were in attendance at Government House: during office hours they stood about the corridors of the Government offices ready to take messages. That was all. His simplicity displayed itself again the following morning. While he was still at breakfast the officer of the Department of Public Works who was in charge of Government House received a message to take immediate steps to have the new art decorations removed from the High Commissioner's residence and the furniture scraped and stained in more sedate colours, and a few weeks later Lord and Lady Plumer delighted in showing different articles of furniture and asking whether they were recognizable under their skins. Some of the items of decoration it was, however, impossible to have removed and replaced, especially the Hebron glass chandeliers. These, however, were subsequently destroyed in the earthquake of July, 1927, when Lord and Lady Plumer were

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fortunately absent from Jerusalem, but when on their return they surveyed the ruin, amid which were the fragments of the Hebron glass chandeliers, His Excellency remarked that amid so much misfortune the earthquake had effected one good. It had smashed irretrievably those chandeliers. Lord Plumer carried his simplicity into all paths. He let it be known that he did not expect his guests at formal receptions and garden-parties to wear silk hats and morning coats : in fact he would prefer them to wear lounge suits and even linen suits. Here came to the surface his natural kindness, for a silk hat and morning suit is by no means the most comfortable attire at a King's Birthday Garden-Party in Jerusalem.

A part of this natural simplicity was Lord Plumer's disinclination for banquets and large functions of all kinds. Lord and Lady Plumer far preferred small and informal lunch and dinner parties. To these they could invite whom they liked, ignoring completely the table of precedence. After dinner also on these occasions the formal five-minute conversations could be omitted. Even when the Princess Royal and her husband, then Lord Lascelles, were staying at Government House and a number of dinner-parties based on the order of precedence had to be given, Lord Plumer took pains to find opportunities to invite to meet Her Royal Highness, officials and others not sufficiently highly placed to be among the principal guests.

Lord and Lady Plumer were on all occasions a perfect host and hostess, continually moving about among their guests, active in looking after the comfort and pleasure of every one of them. They had the gift of making even the youngest and

ARTS AND CRAFTS

least important of their guests feel that he was as welcome as the most important and highly placed.

Soon after Lord Plumer assumed office, the flags of the two Jewish battalions of the Royal Fusiliers which took part in the Palestine Campaign in 1918 were brought out from England to be placed in the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem. It was arranged that they should be escorted by Jewish ex-soldiers from the railway station to the City. The Arab political leaders protested and went on a deputation to Lord Plumer. The leader said that if the demonstration—as they considered it—took place, they could not be responsible for what might happen. Lord Plumer immediately turned to him and said he did not expect the Arab leaders to be responsible. He would be himself responsible, if there was any disturbance.

An aspect of Lord Plumer's character which endeared him to all was his personal interest in any good acts, however small. There was on one occasion an exhibition and sale of native arts and crafts, organized by a women's society. He advanced the money from his own purse for the arrangement of the exhibition, and he visited it every day of the week during which it was open, bought largely of the work, and finally made a gift of the money he had advanced for the permanent encouragement of the crafts.

I feel that I cannot end the account of his work in Palestine without including extracts from letters which I have received from Sir Stewart Symes, who served as Chief Secretary to Lord Plumer in Palestine from 1925 to 1928, and also from Mr. E. Mills, who served as Assistant Chief Secretary. They both speak, as I can, from

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the closest association with Lord Plumer in his daily work.

The former writes :

“ We heard, before Lord Plumer’s arrival in Palestine, that he enunciated to someone his projected policy as ‘ to be fair ! ’ Some of us who did not know him personally, but had experience of Palestinian complexities, were puzzled. But the interpretation was evident with personal contact. ‘ To be fair ’ was to do the best possible, regardless of all private considerations and earlier prejudice, and to concentrate—absolutely and simply—on the main issue of the individual problem before him. That—to me—was his outstanding characteristic, which was engrained into his personality and whole outlook on life as a personal service.”

The latter writes :

“ The most expressive definition of ‘ gentleman ’ is given in Livy ; it is ‘ He who is not less mindful of another’s freedom than of his own dignity.’ Whenever I think of Lord Plumer these words constantly recur to me. In the art of government they were his precept ; and, in his personal relations with other people, they were supreme in all his actions. He was completely English in his outlook, so that there was in him that happy blend of *pietas* and *gravitas* that distinguish Englishmen at their best from the rest of the world. Thus it was that he cherished the silent work of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem ; and it was his especial delight to invite his guests to visit the hospital and the Warden and his lady,

MR. E. MILLS'S LETTER

whose convenience in these matters he always consulted. Indeed, the work of the Order of St. John seems to have been, for Lord Plumer, the true mark of England's character, for its unobtrusiveness was in complete contrast to the loudly sung and conspicuous advertisements of other countries of their own work in the Holy Land. Similarly, his attitude towards St. George's Cathedral and the Church of England in Palestine was the natural consequence of an English life at its best ; and there was not, I think, an occasion when he returned to Palestine from leave or some duty overseas that he did not enter the Cathedral with the object of seeking support, comfort and guidance in the discharge of his difficult duties in Palestine.

" The Great War had, of course, left its marks upon him. Palestine itself had been stricken ; and it fell to Lord Plumer to open the War cemeteries in the country, which were completed in his days. Few who heard him on those occasions failed to realize that he felt most deeply the sorrows of forlorn mothers, comfortless widows and grieving friends ; and yet, at the same time, he was able by means of his own spiritual alchemy to make us believe that we had been enriched by what we thought our losses, and that our love for those who had gone would be constantly renewed if we did our duty to the best of our abilities.

" Memories of the War indeed easily moved him to tears. Once he spoke to some of us who had been in the Second Army about Passchendaele. He said that, whatever were the rights and wrongs of the initiation of the scheme, he

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was bound to say that the battle having been joined it was a right decision of the Commander-in-Chief to continue it. Loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief demanded no less of him, but apart from that he believed the continuation of the battle was rightly decided. Tears fell while he spoke to us on this matter, and sobs sometimes choked his voice. We were, of course, all very much moved ; and following that event, we were careful never to give him pain by the expression of criticism of the Passchendaele plan."

I feel that it would be impossible to put forth a better appreciation of Lord Plumer's work both in Malta and Palestine than that contained in the *Spectator* shortly after his death in which it says :

" The grave never closed upon a braver heart or a nobler spirit : nor could better example be cited to prove that the soldier turned statesman need not be a man spoiled or a man misplaced. He had all the best soldierly qualities, courage, simplicity, straightforwardness, devotion to duty : and it was just these qualities that he brought to bear, with such signal success, upon the task of civil administration. He had to face a difficult and unpromising situation both in Malta and Palestine : he left both countries when his term of office ended, amidst universal acclamations and secure in the respect and affection of the whole population. His methods, in both cases, were the same. He had to deal with people of much intellectual acumen, skilled in all the arts of rhetoric, of finesse, of political legerdemain. He never

THE SAME SOLID FRONT

made the mistake of trying to outplay them at their own game: he was content to present to all alike the same solid front of good humour, firmness and fair dealing. His genuine kindness of heart won all men's affection, just as his sterling qualities of courage and impartiality commanded their respect. People, as the saying goes, 'Knew where they were with him.' They knew that in times of trouble they could count on his sympathy and help, but they knew equally well that he would stand no nonsense. When he said No, he meant No."

In the foregoing pages I have tried to show how Lord Plumer dealt with the various problems with which he was faced as High Commissioner in Palestine.

I always think that his administration of Palestine and the way in which he adjusted the balance between the Arabs and the Jews and gained the trust of all concerned, irrespective of their various religions, must rank as his greatest achievement. He was nearly seventy years of age when he undertook that task. He never spared himself. The same thoroughness was manifest throughout. I am afraid that he overtaxed his strength in Palestine and that he never recovered from the strain of those years.

When I started to compile this memoir, I asked Mr. L. S. Amery, who was Secretary of State for the Colonies when Lord Plumer was at Malta and Palestine, if he would be kind enough to give me his impressions of Lord Plumer's work in those places. In the former pages we have seen how his administration was appreciated by those on

PALESTINE

the spot. The following show how the work of the soldier-statesman was appreciated by the Secretary of State and the Government at Home.

Mr. Amery writes :

“ In August, 1919, I was sent out to Malta by my chief, Lord Milner, in order to discuss with Lord Plumer the critical situation of the Maltese finances, about which the new Governor had made urgent representations to the Colonial Office, as well as to look into the general political position in the island colony, which we knew had been far from satisfactory. I had long known Lord Plumer well, by repute and occasional personal contact ; as an indefatigable column commander in South Africa, who never led his men into a Boer trap ; as the one senior officer at the War Office who was enlightened enough to appreciate and support Mr. Arnold-Forster's scheme of Army reorganization ; as the one Army Commander in the Great War as to whose outstanding merit all shades of opinion at the front were in agreement. But I had never worked closely with him, and felt by no means certain as to how far even the most brilliant soldier was capable of handling what was evidently a confused and tangled political and administrative problem, or 'how far he would welcome the intrusion of a civilian, and one much his junior, who had obviously been sent to 'spy out the land' as well as to consult with him.

“ On this last point reassurance was a matter of minutes. From the first moment Lord Plumer made it clear that I was welcome and that he had no other thought but that my visit could be of

TRANSFORMATION

help to himself and to the people of Malta. The kindness and hospitality of both Lord and Lady Plumer to myself and to my wife on this our first, and on more than one subsequent, visit to Malta will always stand out among our happiest recollections. As for the situation itself, his only concern was that I should see everything and everybody for myself, and for a more than strenuous fortnight I was engaged in the unfettered discussion of Maltese affairs with every one, official and unofficial, who had information to give, or views to express, in the inspection of every public institution in the island colony, and in the perusal of endless files.

“ On the former point any doubt I might have entertained as to the political capacity of military governors was quickly set at rest, when I came to realize what a transformation the new Governor had managed to bring about in the three or four months since his arrival. The inevitable restrictions of the War, and the combination of soaring food prices with starvation wages, had created a state of affairs in which anti-government and anti-British agitation had found an easy field for its activities. Long-seething discontent had broken out in open riots and, for a moment, Malta had seemed completely out of hand. All this was already a fading memory by the time I arrived. From the hour of his landing Lord Plumer by his firmness, dignity and serene self-confidence had imposed respect for the authority of the King’s representative and for the forces of law upon a naturally loyal and orderly population. Within a few weeks his unaffected kindness, his twinkling

PALESTINE

humour and, above all, that 'plain good intention' to which Burke assigned so high a place in public affairs, had completely won their hearts. Whatever else was wrong with Maltese affairs, I was able to report to Lord Milner, within the first few days, that he was fortunate in having at the head of them a Governor who knew his job, knew his own mind, and enjoyed the confidence and affection of the people.

"That Lord Plumer had got the administrative and financial side of his task at his finger's ends I realized at once. Nor did it take long for him to convince me, on the facts and figures, that the parlous state of the Maltese finances was in large measure due to the conditions imposed by the Imperial authorities during the War, and that his demand for an Imperial grant in aid for £250,000 was fully justified by the circumstances. What caused me more concern was to discover, towards the end of my visit, what would be his reaction to the conclusion to which I was steadily drawn by my contact with the problem, that a radical change in the political constitution of Malta was eminently desirable.

"Malta had for a time at the end of the previous century enjoyed that most unworkable of all forms of constitution—at any rate where there are any live issues in dispute—namely, an elected majority without direct responsibility for administration. This had been suspended by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and since then the elected members had been in a minority, incapable of holding up entirely the machinery of legislation and finance, but sustaining in the Legislature, and spreading

MR. AMERY'S CONCLUSION

throughout the island, an attitude of purely negative and obstructive criticism.

"The conclusion to which I was drawn was that there was no inherent reason, provided all matters affecting the security of Malta as a great Imperial naval base and fortress were left in the unfettered control of the Governor, why the Maltese should not be given the opportunity of seeing whether they could not administer their own local affairs as a self-governing community. They might make a muddle of things ; but, if so, no irrevocable harm would be done. On the other hand, there was plenty of intelligence available to encourage the hope that they might make a reasonable success of the venture. They would, no doubt, fight among themselves. But towards whatever purposes agitation would be directed in future, it would not be that constant criticism and agitation against the Imperial Government which was beginning steadily to poison the whole atmosphere in Malta and which might, if left to go on indefinitely, end by creating a permanent tradition of disaffection.

"It was with no little hesitation that I first broached this conclusion to a Military Governor, to whom such a conception of the situation might well be unfamiliar, and who had just proved himself so successful in the initial assertion of his direct authority. I found Lord Plumer, from the outset, wholeheartedly in sympathy with my general diagnosis of the moral situation, and keenly interested in my suggestions for the actual working out of the proposed dual system of government. On this basis of essential agreement

PALESTINE

the new Maltese constitution was subsequently worked out in correspondence between us, and as the outcome of endless patient discussion of every detailed feature between Lord Plumer and the leaders of the self-constituted Maltese National Assembly, and finally inaugurated in solemn state and amid universal rejoicings in November, 1921.

“ That constitution has had to be temporarily suspended in recent years, not, indeed, owing to any difficulty or friction arising out of the ‘ dyarchy ’ or division of functions between the self-governing Maltese Government and the autocratic Malta Imperial Government, but owing mainly to the bitterness of the local feuds engendered over the language question, exaggerated by religious issues with which it was unnecessarily complicated. But there is no reason why it should not be restored once general acceptance has been secured for that more definite settlement of the language question which was made inevitable by the insistence of the over-zealous champions of Italian on upsetting the somewhat loosely defined *status quo* which Lord Plumer had been reluctant to disturb.

“ In any case, as long as Lord Plumer was there, all ran smoothly. Whether as autocratic governor of an Imperial fortress, or as constitutional monarch confining himself to giving shrewd advice to Ministers always ready to ask for it, he ruled or reigned universally respected and beloved by all classes of the Maltese community as well as by the fighting services. Those were halcyon days to which Malta still looks back regretfully. When they came to an end Lord and Lady Plumer

A GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP DECLINED

left amid demonstrations of warm-hearted affection such as have rarely fallen to the lot of any British Governor anywhere.

“Soon after his return—I had by then become Secretary of State for the Colonies—it was my privilege to convey to him the urgent request of the Australian Commonwealth that he should go out as Governor-General in succession to Lord Forster. It would have been an admirable appointment and immensely popular with the Australian ex-service men who had returned from the front with an unquestioning admiration for the Army Commander whose operations always achieved all that was ever possible in the circumstances, and who never let his men down. Unfortunately the heavy expense of the appointment compelled him very reluctantly to decline the suggestion.

“He had, in any event, every reason for thinking that he had given more than his due measure of strenuous and devoted public service in field and office, and that he was entitled to a few years of that slightly less exacting and responsible activity which was all the leisure with which he could ever be content. Yet once again at my earnest entreaty, he consented to postpone his claim to be released from the yoke. Sir Herbert Samuel had just completed five years of a most successful administration as the first British High Commissioner in Palestine. He had been conspicuously impartial in carrying out the difficult task of interpreting the terms of the Mandate by which Britain undertook to establish the Jewish National Home in Palestine without detriment

PALESTINE

to the rights and interests of the existing Arab population. He had with immense energy and efficiency initiated, and, indeed, largely carried out, a most far-reaching and comprehensive administrative and economic reconstruction aimed at converting a more or less derelict and war-wasted Turkish province into a progressive modern country. What Palestine now wanted was a period of firm, just and sympathetic administration in order to consolidate the progress made and to secure general acceptance of the new order of things.

“To my mind there was only one man whose personal qualities and whose prestige made him the right man at the right time for this work. But I confess that I hesitated for some time before I ventured to press a man in his sixty-eighth year to undertake one of the most difficult and thorny tasks in the whole field of Empire administration; for while I never doubted his capacity to carry it out I knew it could only be at more expense of health and strength than I had any right to ask. From the outset I made it clear that I could not ask Lord Plumer to commit himself to serving for the whole normal term of a governor's administration, and that I would be only too glad if he would consent to stay for three years. Even so, hard though I pressed him, I hardly hoped that either he, or Lady Plumer, would make the sacrifice involved.

“That I was right in my choice and in my insistence, at any rate from the public point of view, is beyond dispute. The same qualities that had made Lord Plumer master of the situation

NO BED OF ROSES

in Malta—his easy, confident firmness that no one dared question, his determination to know every detail of the work of administration himself, while yet making every subordinate feel that he was trusted and encouraged to think for himself—insured his success in Palestine from the outset. The whole machine of government moved with smoothness and efficiency. At a time when the whole of Syria next door was in a ferment of discontent or open revolt, scarcely kept under by 40,000 French troops, Palestine enjoyed complete tranquillity under the control of a few aeroplanes, a handful of police—and a veteran Field-Marshal. As in Malta, too, so in Palestine all sections of the community, however keen their dissensions, soon found themselves united in affection as well as in respect for a chief, who knew everything and everybody, who went everywhere, and whose quiet humour deflated Oriental excitement and diffused common sense.

“Not that Palestine was a bed of roses during those years. The rapid economic progress of the preceding years which had accompanied a large influx of Jewish immigration was followed by a period of acute economic indigestion, only partially eased by the programme of public works initiated as the outcome of the guaranteed loan which I was able to secure at this time. Immigration had to be cut down while the Government strove with what, for so small a country, was a tremendous problem of unemployment. At the same time the Treasury at home was insisting relentlessly on cutting down its own contribution to military defence in the Middle East, and, fight

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as I might for my protégés, some, at least, of that pressure I could not but transmit to those on the spot.

“In deference to this pressure Lord Plumer carried out a comprehensive scheme for the reorganization of the security forces both in Palestine and Transjordan. The various police and mounted gendarmerie forces in the two territories were amalgamated, on the one hand, into a single civil police force in each territory, and, on the other, into a single military mounted force known as the Transjordan Frontier Force, which converted both Palestine and Transjordan from any danger of invasion from the side of the Arabian desert, where our relations with Ibn Saud were still anything but satisfactory. This involved the scrapping of the existing small force of purely British gendarmerie, though some 200 of them were incorporated in and distributed through the ranks of the new Palestine Police.

“This rearrangement was not only a very substantial economy, but for all normal police purposes a great improvement. Its only weakness—and that was the fault not of the High Commissioner, but of the Secretary of State who had to insist on economies—was that it left no solid nucleus of purely British and impartial force available for the eventuality of serious racial rioting in Jerusalem or the larger cities. The disastrous riots which suddenly blazed out over the Wailing Wall incident not long after Lord Plumer’s departure might well have been prevented from spreading as they did if such a nucleus had been kept in being.

THE STRAIN OF THE YEARS

“As for the Frontier Force, it fully justified Lord Plumer’s belief that it would prove efficient and meet all the needs of defence against the desert. But over the incidence of its cost as between Palestine and Transjordan, or rather between Palestine and the British Exchequer, which was making good the deficit on Transjordan revenues, a long and stubborn battle was fought in which the Secretary of State was the buffer between the contending parties, and in the course of which Lord Plumer made it clear that he would sooner resign than submit to what he felt would be real injustice to the people of Palestine whose welfare he was so determined to promote.

“Still these were after all minor vexations in three years of strenuous and fruitful activity. The fulfilment and consolidation of the policy of establishing the Jewish National Home in Palestine was loyally advanced in spite of all the economic difficulties of the time. Jew and Arab alike were made to feel that the interests of each were watched and cared for by one who preserved complete impartiality between them, and was only concerned for the prosperity and future unity of Palestine as a whole. Public feeling at home, for a time more than doubtful about the wisdom of the whole Palestine experiment, became steadily more convinced that, however difficult and at times discouraging, the experiment was succeeding and was well worth making a success.

“But the strain of the years was telling, and I had no hesitation in fulfilling my promise to the Field-Marshal, now over seventy, that the hour of release would come at the end of the three

PALESTINE

years, or at least very soon after. He had carried out with conspicuous success the piece of work which I had believed, rightly, that no one else could do as well. He had proved, both in Malta and in Palestine, that a great soldier can also be, not only a firm and just administrator, but a wise and generous judge of a difficult political situation. He left Palestine, as he had left Malta, beloved and regretted by every section of its much-divided community. To the last ounce of his strength he had served the State, and had made a worthy contribution, no less to the material and spiritual strength of the Empire at more than one difficult point, than to its security on the field of battle. His memorial is in the hearts and traditions of the communities whom he befriended and helped forward, no less than in that of the soldiers who gladly trusted their lives to him on the South African veldt or on Flanders Fields."

To give an idea of his busy life in Palestine I am quoting details given me by Lady Plumer. She says that at the beginning of April, 1925, whilst they were paying a visit in Somersetshire they met the Archbishop and Mrs. Davidson at Wells. The former asked them of their future plans and when he was told that it was decided that they were to go to Palestine, he said 'Thank God,' a beautiful tribute which was never forgotten by the future High Commissioner.

On 14th August, 1925, they sailed by P & O to Port Said where Captain Monkton—Sir Herbert Samuel's A.D.C., met them. After seeing the sights of Port Said, they embarked in H.M.S. *Caradoc*, which the Admiralty had arranged under

ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Captain Hamilton, and arrived at Jaffa the following morning. On arrival the Mayors of Jaffa and Iclavio awaited with addresses which, as each one was delivered first in Arabic then in Hebrew and finally in English, took some time. The special train did not take long to get to Jerusalem. No entry could have been less impressive. An ugly little station covered with bunting and flags. After more addresses they got into the car to drive to Government House, stopping for a few minutes at the Cathedral. The Chaplain, Mr. Steer, had been through the War and knew the new High Commissioner. He was sworn in at five o'clock and after inspecting the Guard of Honour and talking to the people who were assembled to meet him they were pretty well tired out when at last they were able to inspect their new home. The German Hospice built at the wish of the Emperor was not an attractive building. The situation was perfect, looking right over the Dead Sea to the hills of Transjordan. It was so high that the heat was never oppressive. There was plenty to do, not only in Jerusalem but in every part of Palestine. Small as it is, every inch is full of the past, and in the present there are always Jews and Arabs. The first month Hebron, Gaza, Nablus, Karim, Bethlehem, Nazarette, Tiberias had to be visited, their schools and hospitals inspected and the notables had to be interviewed. By the aid of a garden-party, some luncheons and a few dinner-parties they got to know the people. Early in November they went to Haifa by train in the coach which was put on a siding and in which they lived so that no one had the trouble and expense of putting up the High Commissioner. From there they visited Mount Carmel.

PALESTINE

One expedition is worth mentioning. About three weeks after his arrival the High Commissioner heard from Amman that matters there were not quite satisfactory and it was thought that a personal visit to the Emir would be useful. It was, therefore, arranged to send an aeroplane to fetch him and bring him back the same day. He had never been up in the air and he was still very lame from his attack of shingles, so getting in and out was a matter of difficulty. He never hesitated for a second and no one but his wife and son-in-law knew that it was a trial trip for him. The visit was a great success and the matter settled to everyone's satisfaction.

Early in the spring the Members of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem visited the Holy Land. The Sub-Prior (Lord Scarbrough) and a good many other Members of the Order stayed at Government House. There was an Investiture in the Large Hall.

On 11th October King Feisal came for a short visit and also Monsieur Ponsot, who had succeeded Monsieur de Juvenal as French High Commissioner in Syria.

Early in February, 1927, the High Commissioner and his wife paid a visit to Cairo to stay with Lord and Lady Lloyd. They dined one night with the Prime Minister and the next night with King Fuad.

On 13th March, the High Commissioner's seventieth birthday, he had the following telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr. Amery) :

" Please accept my most sincere congratulations on your 70th birthday. The occasion is perhaps

ON LEAVE

without parallel in the history of the Colonial Service and I count myself fortunate in that the Administration of Palestine is in the hands of one with so long and distinguished a record of public service."

On 6th May Lord Allenby arrived and he unveiled the War Memorials at Ramleh and on the next day in the Jerusalem Cemetery the unveiling of the New Zealand and Australian War Memorials took place. Shortly afterwards Sir Philip and Lady Chetwode came to stay. It was a strange coincidence that he as G.O.C. XXth Army Corps was the first General to occupy Government House, the German Hospice which was built, it is supposed, by the Emperor's orders. He was also the last guest to stay there. On 15th May the High Commissioner and his wife went on leave to England and spent a very happy time. They arrived just in time for the Chelsea Flower Show which they thoroughly enjoyed after the arid vegetation of Palestine. They went to Epsom, Ascot, Lord's and many other social functions.

On 18th June Lord Plumer unveiled the Charterhouse War Memorial and I have heard from many Old Carthusians how impressed they were by his speech. On 29th June Marshal Foch, who was on a visit to England, dined with the French Ambassador and Lord and Lady Plumer were invited to meet him. It was the last time that the two great soldiers met.

On 1st July they went to stay with the Archbishop of York for the wonderful services at the York Minster to celebrate the 1,300th anniversary of its foundation. They were most impressive.

PALESTINE

On 11th July there was the most terrible thunderstorm in London. At the same time the earthquake occurred in Palestine and the Colonial Office telegraphed to say that Government House had had to be evacuated.

On 23rd July Lord and Lady Plumer went over to Ypres and I was privileged to accompany them. We visited the War Memorials at Sanctuary Wood and St. Julien, and on the following day my old Chief unveiled the Menin Gate Memorial in the presence of the King of the Belgians. I have described the ceremony and given his speech in full later in this book.

On the same afternoon Lord Plumer laid the foundation of the British Church at Ypres and of the British School which Eton gave. Everyone who visits the Ypres Salient should most certainly visit both the above. The church is beautiful and it is a sheer delight to see the children of those splendid men who look after our beautiful cemeteries being educated in our British school. On account of the earthquake Lord Plumer decided to return to Palestine and he and Lady Plumer sailed on 29th July for Jerusalem. The only habitation that had been found for them was a part of a Convent on the Bethlehem road called Tantena. After their return the first duty was to visit all the places which had suffered by the earthquake. First Jerusalem Government House with its 110 rooms, not one of which was not damaged. It was a wonder that only one poor old Russian woman was killed and that everything in the house was not destroyed. The tour round the old city began, of course, with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of which the roof was badly damaged. Nablus was next visited

EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN

The death-rate there was heavier than in any other part of Palestine. The streets are so narrow that it was difficult to release the living and get out the bodies of the dead. No praise can be too high for the behaviour of the British Police who worked eighteen hours on end in the awful heat, digging out the dead. The High Commissioner had them all on parade and told them how much he appreciated what they had done.

Ramleh, Ludd and other villages had to be seen. The Jerusalem Post Office was visited for all the officials, telephone girls, etc., had behaved splendidly and never left their work though the post office was very badly damaged. There was no village or town in Palestine or Transjordan that was hurt by the earthquake that was not visited.

Towards the end of January the High Commissioner and his wife paid a visit to Egypt and the Soudan. They arrived at Khartoum on the anniversary of Gordon's death, so before going to the Palace, the Field-Marshal placed the wreath, which the Governor-General had sent, on Gordon's statue. Every moment of their visit was full of interest. The Governor-General was going to inspect the White Nile District, so they went with him as far as Koster and had two delightful days. On their return to the Palace they did the usual sightseeing, visited the Cathedral, Gordon College, the Zoological Gardens, Omdurman, etc. As all the days were so full they went out to breakfast twice, first with the South Staffordshire Regiment and then with The King's Regiment.

On 1st February they went to Assouan where they spent a delightful fortnight at the Cataract Hotel.

PALESTINE

On the 17th they arrived in Jerusalem and went to their new residence which was really some flats converted to form a temporary residence for the High Commissioner until a new Government House could be built.

A great many guests came to stay and the spare rooms were never empty. The Prince of Piedmont and his sister arrived on Palm Sunday but only stayed a few days. Then in Easter week H.R.H. Princess Mary, as she then was, and Lord Lascelles with Lord and Lady Boyne, arrived. Her Royal Highness was given a most enthusiastic welcome by all the population. All the Arabs in their picturesque dresses, occupied the hill above the station to see her arrive. The Girl Guides furnished a Guard of Honour. All the principal people were presented to Her Royal Highness. She was much interested in all the sightseeing and historic associations. The summer was a very hot one and the house in the town was very different from the old Government House where there was always a breeze at night. The Field-Marshal was ill on and off during his last few months and was so far from well when the time came to leave that his doctor insisted on going as far as Port Said. However, directly he got on the sea he began to improve and after a fortnight at Buxton he was a different man.

The change from the parched and arid land of Palestine to the rich vegetation of Yorkshire and Derbyshire was worth more to him than anything.

In 1928 he became the President of Enham Council and later on Trustee of Sir Frederick Milner's Fund for Village Settlements.

Before he went to Palestine he was President of the Veterans' Association and hardly ever missed

PRESIDENT OF THE M.C.C.

a committee meeting. In connection with the Veterans' Association it is interesting to quote from a statement by H.R.H. Princess Beatrice who said that "Sympathy for all sorts and conditions of men was the real secret of his influence and power and the keynote of his character."

He also became a member of the Royal Patriotic Fund Committee. He was Chairman of The Soldiers' Daughters' Home at Hampstead and was most regular in his attendance at the committee meetings. He was also President of the Miniature Rifle Clubs and in 1929 he was made President of the Society of Yorkshiresmen in London and the Yorkshire Society.

In the same year he became President of the M.C.C., an appointment which he always said gave him more pleasure than any other. He always loved cricket and the whole summer he was constantly at Lord's. He enjoyed working with all the members of the committee and of the Secretary (Mr. W. Findlay) he said: "If he had been a soldier I would have liked to have had him on my staff."

On 9th April, 1930, he spoke for the first time in the House of Lords on the Defence of the Empire by Air and its drawbacks. The motion was withdrawn. On 15th April he spoke again on the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Lord FitzAlan moved for the retention of clause. He supported Lord FitzAlan's motion in a very able speech, which was carried by 45 votes against 12.

He only spoke once more in the House and that was to support Lord Trenchard's motion on our policy in the Middle East.

On 23rd March, 1929, he and his wife and daughters went over to Ypres for the Dedication

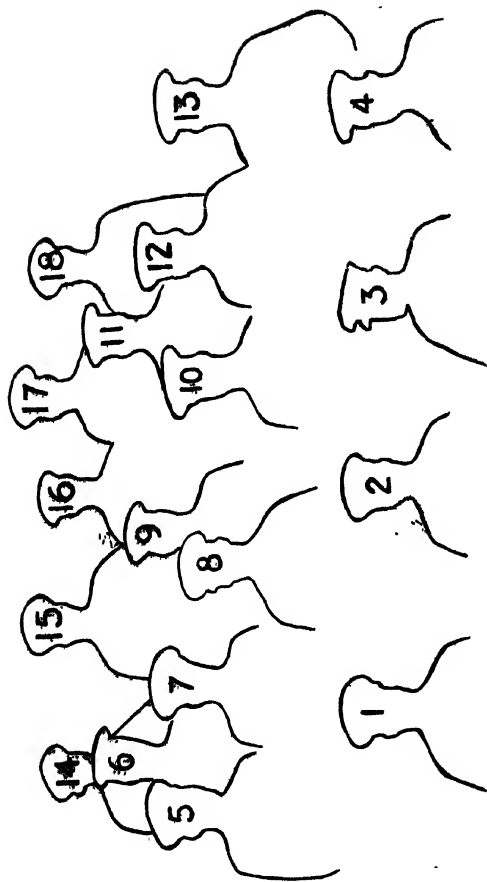
PALESTINE

of the British Church. On 27th March he attended the funeral of Maréchal Foch—a long and tiring day.

In January, 1930, he was far from well and was ordered abroad to get some sunshine. They went to Santa Margerita to the Imperial Palace Hotel with its nice garden right down to the sea.

He was not well all the summer but did all the committees, etc.

In August the Inns of Court had their camp at Petworth and he arranged to go down and inspect them, but the night he arrived he was taken ill and had to return to London. He was in bed for a week and then was well enough to go to Buxton, but he was never really well again.



1. GEN. SIR H. S. RAWLINSON, BART.
2. GEN. SIR H. C. O. PLUMER
3. GEN. HON. SIR J. H. BYNG
4. LT.-GEN. EARL OF CAVAN
5. MAJ.-GEN. C. R. R. MCGREGOR
6. LT.-GEN. SIR D. O. SNOW
7. MAJ.-GEN. C. F. ROMER

8. MAJ.-GEN. HON. SIR W. LAMPTON
9. LT.-GEN. W. P. PULTENEY
10. LT.-GEN. SIR W. T. FURSE
11. MAJ.-GEN. H. R. DAVIES
12. LT.-GEN. SIR F. J. DAVIES
13. LT.-GEN. SIR CHARLES FERGUSON, BART.

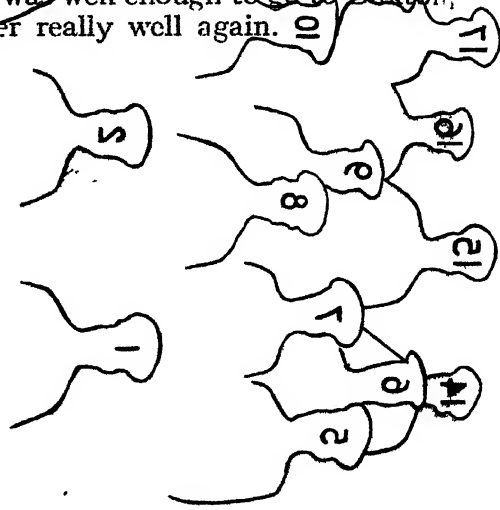
14. MAJ.-GEN. J. PONSONBY
15. MAJ.-GEN. R. L. MULLENS
16. MAJ.-GEN. HON. E. J. MONTAGUE-STUART-WORTLEY
17. MAJ.-GEN. SIR H. J. JEUDWINE
18. MAJ.-GEN. A. E. SANDBACH

PALESTINE

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4. Mr. E. Jones
5. Mr. H. Jones
6. Mr. I. Jones
7. Mr. J. Jones
8. Mr. K. Jones
9. Mr. L. Jones
10. Mr. M. Jones
11. Mr. N. Jones
12. Mr. O. Jones
13. Mr. P. Jones
14. Mr. Q. Jones

13. Mr. C. E. Jones
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6. Mr. P. Jones
5. Mr. Q. Jones
4. Mr. R. Jones
3. Mr. S. Jones
2. Mr. T. Jones
1. Mr. U. Jones



CHAPTER XVIII

HIS INTEREST IN CRICKET. PRESIDENT M.C.C.

I SHOULD like here to refer to my old Chief's interest in games and sport. In his younger days he was a keen polo player and right up to his time as Commander-in-Chief Northern Command at York he was a keen follower to hounds with the York and Ainsty. All his life he was a keen cricketer. He played regularly for his old Regiment and used to go in first. I am told that he had a very stubborn defence. He certainly had later when he defended the Ypres Salient. He was a member of the Staff College XI of 1886-7, a team which only lost one match in two years. Some interesting names appear amongst the Staff College players of those years. They include Churchill, Wyndham, Kitson, Kemball, Gatliff, Paris, Forster, Crawford, Hammersley, Bewicke, Methuen, Apsley Smith, Smith-Dorrien and Caunter, many of whom rose to high rank in later years.

The last named, who was the wizard bowler of the Staff College in those years and afterwards Second-in-Command of the R.M.C. Sandhurst when I was an Instructor, tells a good story of my old Chief. He missed a catch off Caunter's bowling. Caunter looked rather blue. Shortly afterwards another of the side dropped another catch off his bowling and he perhaps looked even more blue. As they

HIS INTEREST IN CRICKET

crossed between the overs Plumer said to Caunter with a smile, "Missing's catching." He had a very keen sense of humour.

As a captain of the Staff College XI many years later I would like to record that the present cricket pavilion at the Staff College was presented by the Staff College students of that year. General Plumer was made an Honorary Member of the I. Zingari after the War for his signal services to his country, and I believe that this honour pleased him immensely.

It is of interest to note that the I.Z. were playing their annual match with the R.E. at Chatham on 20th and 21st July, 1933, the first date being the day of Lord Plumer's funeral. The I.Z. side was captained by Brigadier F. S. G. Piggott, a sapper. After dinner Brigadier Piggott asked all those wearing the I.Z. sash to stand with him whilst he proposed the following toast :

"Brother officers, with the permission of your President, I would ask you to drink with us to the memory of a revered Member of our Club who was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey to-day. Lord Plumer exemplified in his life the three Principles of I. Zingari : he kept his temper, he kept his promise (and the Club has kept its promise to-day in meeting you on the Cricket field although it is the actual day of his Funeral), and he kept his Wicket up. You all know how he kept his Wicket up at Ypres, in Malta, and in Palestine. In short, throughout his life, in the widest sense, he played Cricket. I would ask you to drink with us a Silent Toast in his Memory."

The Toast was duly honoured, those present,

HIS SENSE OF DUTY

numbering about 100 officers, rising to join the I. Zingari team.

I quote it as a very graceful act.

He was offered the Presidency of the M.C.C., the ideal of all cricketers, and I know that he was greatly delighted at the honour. About this time I went to visit him at his house in Ennismore Gardens. He was recovering from a serious operation. He told me that he had been offered the Presidency of the M.C.C. and had also been offered Palestine. I remember so well advising him to take the M.C.C. on the score that he had done more than his share for his country, and had earned a rest. I saw that he was not pleased. I told Admiral Sir John de Robeck, an old friend of his and mine. He went to see him and told him the same with the same result. I am told that others went subsequently and gave him the same advice, but with no success at all. Such was his sense of duty that he bit their heads off.

He went to Palestine and it is recorded elsewhere in this book how well he did there, but I venture to think that it was his great work there coming on the top of the strain which he had endured for years, that broke his health and from which he really never recovered.

On his return from Palestine he was made President of the M.C.C., and I know how much he appreciated this great honour and how much he enjoyed his year of office.

I know from Lord Hawke and Mr. Findlay, Secretary M.C.C., what a splendid President he was. He presided at all the meetings. He listened to all the views put forward and then gave his decision, just as he did when commanding

PRESIDENT M.C.C.

the Second Army. He lunched with the teams on the first day of every match at Lord's, and thus met all the amateurs and professionals playing cricket that year. This will ever be remembered. His speeches as President of the M.C.C. will always be a source of joy to those who heard them. He revelled in that year when he was President.

The following is a story showing his kindness of heart. He met an old friend of Staff College days, Brigadier-General Caunter, off whose bowling he missed that catch. They had not met for very many years. He said, "Do you know that I have been elected President of the M.C.C. for this year?" Caunter answered, "Yes." "Do you know that the President has a box over there where he entertains his old friends to tea?" Answer, "Yes." "Do you know that he expects you to come to tea with him every day of the match?"

Of course as regards the Eton and Harrow match there was no holding him. It is almost impossible for me as a Cheltonian to grasp the feeling of these Etonians and Harrovians. I mildly remarked to my old Chief one year on the eve of the great match that I hoped that Harrow would do well after all their years of failure. Without a moment's hesitation he said, "Well, I don't. I hope they will be beaten by an innings before lunch on the first day!" I remember once seeing Lord Hailsham come up to the top of the Pavilion at Lord's on the first day of the Eton and Harrow match. He had been staying with us at Aldershot just before and sat down next to me. I said, "Mr. Baldwin is sitting two rows behind you." He answered, "I don't care where Mr.

A WONDERFUL SPEECHMAKER

Baldwin is sitting. I never speak to him on this occasion." Needless to add that Mr. Baldwin was at Harrow.

I suppose they are all the same. My eldest brother was at Eton. He is a quiet and peaceful fellow in normal times but Lord's, London clothes and an old Etonian tie just make him go like the rest.

Lord Plumer was a firm supporter of the Navy and Army match at Lord's. When Admiral Sir John de Robeck was President of the Navy Cricket and I was President of the Army Cricket after the Great War, we started the idea of asking our friends to tea at Lord's on the occasion of the Navy and Army match. When Lord Plumer became President of the M.C.C. he insisted on joining in this and it has since been carried on. Every successive President of the M.C.C. has joined in with the Presidents of Navy and Army Cricket, and between them at least 1,000 guests are asked and it is a most enjoyable function. He knew the value of games and I know that I am right in saying that at Malta he hardly ever missed a cricket or football match, and what is more, if he was present he expected others to be present and they were. I was present when he presided as President M.C.C. at a dinner given by the M.C.C. to the M.C.C. XI under Chapman when they returned from Australia. He made a most inspiring speech.

He taught himself to be a wonderful speech-maker. He told me once that he always carried a few headings, as in one case he found himself unable to say anything more and had thus failed. I am quite sure that he never failed again and I have heard him make many wonderful speeches.

PRESIDENT M.C.C.

I am told that he used to memorize all his big speeches. If so, they were indeed a triumph of memory. He was never at a loss for a word and had a wonderful way of mixing up the note of real sincerity with a keen sense of humour.

CHAPTER XIX

HIS LOVE OF ETON. THE MENIN GATE MEMORIAL

IN previous chapters allusion has been made to Lord Plumer's devotion to Eton. It is, therefore, fitting that I should include two speeches which he made and which I venture to think show his true feelings for his old school. The first was made at an old Etonian Dinner at the Second Army Headquarters in December, 1916, and was as follows :

“ In proposing the toast of ‘ Floreat Etona ’ General Plumer said :

“ ‘ With your approval I suggest we should send a telegram to Dr. Warre, the Provost of Eton, whom most of us know and remember with considerable awe, and those of us privileged to know him personally regard with deep affection. We are all very glad that he is still at the head of Eton administration.

“ The telegram I propose is as follows :

“ ‘ To Provost of Eton.

“ ‘ 75 Old Etonians of the Second Army assembled here to commemorate Founder's Day send greetings to you and to the old School. Floreat Etona.’

“ Next I should like to thank in your name

HIS LOVE OF ETON

the officers—Major Wynter, Colonel Warre, Major Darell, Major Knowles—who have organized and arranged this gathering. We are all very grateful to them for all the trouble they have taken.

“I think it is perfectly delightful that in the midst of what must be to all of us the greatest undertaking in our lives, we are able to meet here to celebrate one of the anniversaries of our old School.

“Between us we must represent a good many Founder’s Days spent in Eton. Till I entered the room this evening I had no doubt but that I should be the oldest Etonian present, but I was delighted to find Colonel Carter, R.F.A., who went to Eton in 1869 (a year before I did) forty-seven years ago. It is safe to say that out of those forty-seven at least forty are represented by someone here to-night.

“We are proud of Eton and of our association with it, because we know we have every right to be proud. It may be going a little too far to say that the history of Eton is the history of England; but it is indisputably true to say that at every period of the history of our country, notably at every time of stress and trial, Eton and Eton’s sons have taken a leading share in national service. In this War we have played, and will continue to play to the last, a part of which future generations of Etonians will be justly proud; not indeed because of any few men who happened to occupy leading positions at the time, but because of the large numbers who have given up much, the many who have given up all without any expectation or even desire for personal

AT ETON

advancement, but actuated solely by what they knew was their duty to their country. We are sure that the spirit which inspired such devotion was largely due to Eton education, Eton training, Eton influence. We are often told that they taught us nothing at Eton. It may be so, but I think they taught it very well. So well that the influence of Eton has remained with us all our lives. I know everyone here, and every old Etonian will agree with me when I say that we have no more powerful incentive to give our best, do our best, and be our best than the two words of the motto of our old School—

‘Floreat Etona.’ ”

The second speech was made at Eton in May, 1919, when the Etonian Generals were honoured by their old School. His speech on that occasion was as follows :

“It is no light task to have to address the Provost, Vice-Provost and Fellows, the Head Master, Lower Master, other Masters, the Captain of the School, the Captain of the Oppidans, and all of you—this great assembly of brother Etonians ; but in consequence and by the misfortune of advanced age it is a task that devolves upon Sir Henry Rawlinson and myself. We have, in the name of the assembled Generals—Etonian Generals—to thank you, the Captain of the School, for the welcome which you have voiced, and to you all for the reception which you have given to us. I know I speak for them all when I say that it has touched us very keenly. It is a day we shall remember all the days of our lives. We

HIS LOVE OF ETON

all of us realize that we are not here to-day as individuals: we are here as representatives of that great army of Etonians who have during the last four and a half years upheld the honour of their School in the service of their country. (Applause.) It is indeed a great army; I don't know the exact numbers, but I believe it is nearly 6,000 of all ranks and of all ages, from a very few like myself who left Eton forty years ago down to the many who a short time back answered their names at 'Absence' here in this School Yard. It was an army of all ranks indeed, and of all ages; but all bound together by one indissoluble bond of love for, and pride in, their old School. (Applause.) The love of Eton grows with age, it flourishes and is strengthened in time of trial and difficulty. None of us here to-day has ever forgotten Eton and what we owe to her. As you know, we never lost an opportunity during those four and a half years of assembling on those great anniversaries—on the Fourth of June, on St. Andrew's Day, on Founder's Day—of assembling together to discuss Eton topics and reviving Eton memories. I can assure you that these gatherings were a great tonic to us: the old forgot that they were old and became young—at any rate they behaved as such. (Laughter.) All of us forgot that we were tired. We are proud of Eton and our association with it—proud because we know we have a right to be. Ever since Eton was founded, she and her sons have played a leading part in the history of our country, and at no time have Eton services been so prominent as in the time when the country was in difficulty.

ETON'S SACRIFICE

The campaign of the last four and half years is no exception to this. The British Empire has emerged triumphantly from the greatest ordeal with which she was ever faced, and Eton claims that in that ordeal and in that triumph she has played a part worthy of herself. She does not base that claim on the prowess or achievements of a few individuals who happened to be in positions of authority and prominence at the time, but she bases her claim on the large number who gave up much, and the many who gave up all, not prompted by any expectation or even desire for self-advancement, but simply by the wish to do what they knew was their duty. For that reason Eton claims, and Eton claims rightly, that the inspiration was due to her influence and her training. (Applause.) When the shock came, which convulsed Europe in the autumn of 1914, Etonians who were soldiers fell naturally into their places, Etonians who were not soldiers took off their coats and offered their services. We know of many who gave up time, position, money, leisure, health and all that makes for enjoyment of life, not in order that they might take up posts of distinction, but in order to take up and carry through duties, however slight or trivial, provided that by so doing they would be of real service to their country. (Applause.) Eton appreciates that service and is grateful for it. Eton offered up her sons as a sacrifice—the sacrifice was accepted—and the price has been paid. We know, all of us, many Etonians, relatives and friends, who left home full of life and spirits and in all the vigour of manhood, who have returned maimed,

HIS LOVE OF ETON

scarred, poorer in health and poorer in circumstances. That was the price they paid for service, and we know that price was paid gladly. There were many who went forth who have not and will not return. Their graves lie out in France and Belgium, and in all the other theatres of war. All honour, all glory to them! Every one of us realizes that it is not we who fought and came back who have won this War, but those who have fought and who have not come back. It is for us Etonians who remain to keep up sacredly and reverently our Roll of Honour, so that future generations of Etonians may realize that the names inscribed on that Roll are the true heroes of the War. (Applause.) We owe a debt to them, and it is for us to try and pay it; and how can we? We can pay it by upholding in our lives the honour of our School as they upheld it by their deaths. Eton has not failed her country during the struggle of the last four years, and it does not require to be a wizard to know that we have troublous times ahead—times that will call for service. We need have no false modesty when we speak of Eton; for I say quite plainly that if any institution, any organization, any community is controlled and led by Etonians, all will be well. (Applause.) It is for us to take up that leadership and to qualify for it, no matter what profession we belong to or what profession we adopt, there are opportunities for public service, and those opportunities must be taken. The War has taught us this. It has taught us a sense of proportion and has shown us clearly the things that really mattered. Faced as we

“FLOREAT ETONA !”

have been by the grim realities of life and death, all personal thoughts of aggrandizement have seemed petty : all personal grievances mean and paltry. The only thing that stood out which really mattered was whether in our work and service we were doing such as was of real value to our country. (Applause.) Let us retain that sense of proportion and that appreciation of things which really matter. If we do, and if we bear in mind all our lives what we learned and acquired at Eton, we shall not fail. Every Etonian has a prospective reward and incentive before him. I am sure no Etonian would ask or desire a higher reward than the recognition that the work he had done was worthy of his old School. No Etonian could have any greater incentive than to give his best, do his best, and be his best, in the two words which we all love so well, and are the motto of our old School—*Floreat Etona !* ’ ’ (Applause.)

The local paper described the above gathering rather neatly by saying : “ Many years ago nineteen boys left Eton and returned yesterday as Generals.”

Their names were :

Major-General	J. Ponsonby.
“	“ R. L. Mullens.
“	“ Hon. E. J. Montagu-Stuart-
	Wortley.
“	“ Hon. W. Lambton.
“	“ Sir H. J. Jeudwine.
“	“ A. E. Sandbach.
“	“ H. R. Davies.
“	“ C. R. McGregor.
“	“ C. F. Romer.

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Lieut.-General Sir T. D'Oyly Snow.

„ „ Sir W. Pulteney.

„ „ Sir W. Furze.

„ „ Sir F. Davies.

„ „ Sir Charles Fergusson, Bt.

General Sir Henry H. Rawlinson, Bt.

„ Sir H. Plumer.

„ Hon. Sir J. H. Byng.

„ Earl of Cavan.

Not being an Etonian, I was not privileged to hear either of the above speeches, but I heard him speak on many occasions and to various audiences. He had a very delightful way of speaking. He was never at a loss for a word. He had a wonderful sense of humour and at once attracted his audience. He drove home his points with tremendous sincerity. The numerous letters which I have received from all parts of the world bear witness of this. Men recall the actual words which he used forty years ago on certain occasions, so deeply did they sink. I always look upon his speech at the opening of the Menin Gate on 24th July, 1927, as his greatest effort. Those of us who were privileged to be present with him on that occasion will never forget how he stood full-square to that great audience in the presence of his true friend and ally, the late King of the Belgians.

It must have been a supreme moment in his life. I shall ever remember my old Chief speaking from the platform. That majestic archway behind him, the memorial to those thousands of gallant men who had given their all for their King and Country. Within that Gateway was Ypres itself still in process of being rebuilt. What memories it brought back! He was standing

AT THE MENIN GATE

looking out towards Passchendaele, looking towards Tyne Cot, the Canadian and those other beautiful cemeteries wherein so many of our comrades lie. Most of them had passed through that very Gateway on their last march to the front. Those ramparts lay behind him. The ramparts which had sheltered British soldiers for years from the appalling shell fire. Our Chief had in his time seen the Ypres behind him just battered to pieces, stone by stone. I am sure he was thinking, as we were, of all those Brigade and Battalion Headquarters which he used to visit living in burrows under those ramparts, of the casualties incurred nightly by the endless stream of transport men, their horses and mules—on their nightmare journeys through that Menin Gate the star shells, crackling rifle fire, shell bursts, plunging horses and dogged Infantrymen. No words of mine could ever depict that nightly scene of horror through the gateways of Ypres. Each gateway a bottle-neck, registered to an inch by the enemy guns. Every man and animal had to run the gauntlet both going in and coming out. The Cloth Hall of world fame. The Cathedral. The Convent. The old Water Tower leaning over like Pisa, and every other building, all in ruins, the old swans still swimming in the moat, nothing left but British pluck. But on that 24th day of July, 1927, the scene had changed. The Belgian nation, helped and inspired by that great King, had put their backs to the wall and had worked incessantly to restore their great and historic City and they have continued to do so ever since until to-day when one may say that every trace of war has been removed from Ypres and the surrounding country with the exception

THE MENIN GATE MEMORIAL

of the bulwarks of History which will remain for all time as evidence of the unselfishness of our elder brethren. The Menin Gate Memorial—at which “Last Post” is sounded every night by Belgian buglers on bugles presented by the British Legion—the Corps, Divisional, Brigade and Regimental memorials erected on various historic places in the Salient, the various cemeteries.

They will remain for all time. I like to dwell on that scene. How the procession which started from the Town Hall halted at a house a hundred yards short of the Menin Gate, whilst the King of the Belgians went upstairs into a house to see the Burgomaster of Ypres who was too ill to attend the ceremony. Such a kind act and one just in keeping with the heart of my old Chief.

Then we saw the scene which I have tried to describe. A great crowd which included many distinguished personages of the Belgian and British nations—a very beautiful service—a very warm appreciation by the King of the Belgians of the gallantry displayed by his comrades of the British Army—and finally the following words spoken by the man who had commanded the troops which had defended Ypres throughout those dreadful and anxious years. His rendering of “He is not missing; he is here” will long be remembered as a comfort and inspiration to the parents and others who heard it. All was hushed. Even the swans which I had watched swimming about in the moat seemed to understand. They or their parents had been shelled day and night for nearly four years.

I give in full the words spoken by Lord Plumer.

“Our hearts are stirred by feelings of deep

“ HE IS HERE ”

emotion as we stand here to pay a nation's tribute to the memory of the great army of men whose names are inscribed on this beautiful memorial, who have no known graves. One of the most tragic features of the Great War was the number of casualties reported as 'Missing, believed killed.' To their relatives there must have been added to their grief a tinge of bitterness and a feeling that everything possible had not been done to recover their loved ones' bodies and give them reverent burial. That feeling no longer exists; it ceased to exist when the conditions under which the fighting was being carried out were realized.

“ But when peace came and the last ray of hope had been extinguished the void seemed deeper and the outlook more forlorn for those who had no grave to visit, no place where they could lay tokens of loving remembrance. The hearts of the people throughout the Empire went out to them, and it was resolved that here at Ypres, where so many of the 'Missing' are known to have fallen, there should be erected a memorial worthy of them which should give expression to the nation's gratitude for their sacrifice and its sympathy with those who mourned them. A memorial has been erected which, in its simple grandeur, fulfils this object, and now it can be said of each one in whose honour we are assembled here to-day: 'He is not missing; he is here.'

“ But this monument which is now to be unveiled does not express only the nation's gratitude and sympathy; it expresses also its pride in the fullness of the sacrifice. It is an acknowledgment that it was only by their sacrifice and the sacrifice

THE MENIN GATE MEMORIAL

of all who laid down their lives that we who fought and survived were able to carry out the task entrusted to us. Indeed, this archway, standing as it does in splendid grandeur at the gate of the town, is like the main body of a protecting army, the lines of defence being represented by the numerous cemeteries grouped around it. Together they are a testimony, more eloquent than any words, of how the troops defended successfully for four years the Ypres Salient.

“ Moreover, this ground, which for all time will be known as the Ypres Salient, is a historical record of the friendship which existed and will always exist between the two armies, British and Belgian, who fought there side by side ; and the town of Ypres, which was shattered beyond all recognition during the War, and has now been rebuilt, illustrates fitly the unconquerable spirit of the Belgian nation.

“ To the glory of God and to the memory of those whose names are inscribed hereon I unveil this memorial in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

I am indebted to Harold Gibb, the blind padre, who was one of Lord Plumer's gallopers in South Africa, for the following :

“ There was something ‘ winning ’ about his voice too that seems to have impressed others besides myself, as I found proved many years after. At the opening of the Menin Gate I found myself standing at his back beneath the great arch while he spoke into the microphone, that his words might be carried to the thousands of Bel-

LISTENING MILLIONS

gians in the Square behind him, and yet further afield to the millions listening-in on the wireless at home. So quiet was his speech that we wondered if his most impressively simple words would carry to those straining to catch them at home. Three days later a lighthouse man on the Dorsetshire coast told me that the little simple Service had carried so clearly to him on his rock-house that he was irresistibly forced to his knees in prayer, and he told me how impressive were Plumer's words, and how they had gone home to him and others."

CHAPTER XX

STORIES OF HIS KINDNESS AND SENSE OF HUMOUR

I AM indebted to a great number of kind friends all over the Empire who have sent me stories and incidents connected with Lord Plumer. I regret that it is only possible to reproduce a few and I have chosen those from which some lesson or point may be gleaned which may be of use to those who follow.

As I have said elsewhere, he hated a telephone and he hated discourtesy or rudeness of any kind. He was always courteous and polite himself and he expected others to be. Whilst commanding the Second Army he issued an order that anyone picking up a telephone receiver would first say who he was.

One morning before his daily conference a junior Gunner Staff officer was rung up on the telephone with a message "Where is Franks?" (Major-General Franks was then M.G.R.A. of the Army.) The Staff officer was rather livery at that early hour and thought it was rather cheek on the part of anyone to ask him abruptly where Franks was. He thought that the inquirer might at least have said "General Franks." He somewhat abruptly replied, "I don't know." The voice at the other end answered very quietly, "Do you mind finding out? Army Commander speaking."

IN CONFERENCE

I recollect another example of his quick decision and judgment. One day in April, 1918, a certain division was on its way to the Second Army from the south. The Divisional Commander came on ahead and I told him the part of the line which the Army Commander had decided that his division should take over. The Divisional Commander at once exclaimed that he could not put his division into that place as it was next to another division that had let his division down in some recent fighting in the south and that it would lead to terrible trouble, etc., a story one had so often heard before. I told the Army Commander who replied without a moment's hesitation, "Tell him I quite understand. The Division will go in where I said. If he doesn't like it I will appoint a new Commander to-morrow." And then to me, "What rubbish. They will be playing football against each other in a few days." We heard no more.

I have had a number of letters from commanders who served under him both in peace and war, who all mention the clear way in which he conducted a conference. During the actual field days, and I am thinking chiefly of his training of the 5th Division at the Curragh before the War, he said little, but the faults and lessons which he used to bring out afterwards at the Conferences or Pow-wows impressed all who heard them. In the Great War he held innumerable conferences with his Commanders and I can think of no one ever leaving without being quite clear what he had to do. As Lord Cavan wrote to me, "At conferences. Deliciously *definite*. No 'I leave it to you partner' like the old days of Bridge, but your task is so-and-so."

HIS KINDNESS AND SENSE OF HUMOUR

Many references have been made in this book to Lord Plumer's love of Eton. It may, therefore, be of interest to say that a contemporary of his at Eton (Mr. G. S. Barnes) writes me as follows :

" Plumer is the only case I can remember of a boy openly and publicly making a ' book ' on the Derby. For several evenings before the race was run, in the year that Galopin won the Derby (1875), he stood in ' Sixpenny ' cricket ground, and offered the market odds against any horse to all comers. I don't think that we ever heard whether the result was successful or not.

" In the same year (1875) he made a plan jointly with Edward Arnold and myself to go to Ascot on the Wednesday in Ascot week—the Hunt Cup day. Wednesday at Eton was and is a ' whole school day,' with school from three to four and from five to six, but we three had no school from three to four because we were all in the first hundred of the school. We all, however, had to appear at two o'clock dinner, and were due to be present at the mathematical schools at five o'clock. Under some plea or other we went out of our respective dinners, got into a cab which we had ordered, and drove to Ascot. There we stayed till about five o'clock, when we were given a lift on a drag back to Eton. We had not, however, the courage to drive right into Eton on the drag, but got off at the foot of the hundred steps which lead up to Windsor Castle, and started to run from there to the mathematical schools. This precaution, however, proved our undoing, for on Windsor Bridge we ran into the arms of Joynes, a senior classical master who knew us

HUMOUR

all. This was about five-forty, we were duly 'complained of' and had to appear before the Head-Master next day, when we were each told to write out an 'Iliad.'

"This little escapade is, I suppose, the sort of thing a schoolboy remembers all his life. I know that Plumer remembered it, as he wrote and told me so from Palestine.

He had, as I have said before, an intense sense of humour and he used to laugh till the tears rolled down his cheeks, when things really amused him. I remember so well one night at Cassel, our Army Headquarters, when I was rung up by a very irate Corps Commander in a neighbouring Army who was very cross because both the M.G.R.A. and I had paid a visit to the Headquarters of a certain division which had been lent to this irate Corps Commander for a certain operation. The Division had only recently arrived from Australia and had never before been engaged. The Army Commander was sitting on a sofa in fits of laughter at hearing me trying to pacify this irate Corps Commander. I kept asking the Corps Commander to speak to my Chief and to complain to him. I kept asking the Chief to speak. Nothing would induce him to do so. He revelled in seeing me getting told off by the irate Corps Commander, but I heard afterwards that the Chief went off early next morning to tell the Corps Commander how much he had enjoyed the joke and that he was responsible.

An officer who was his B.G.G.S. in the Fifth Corps (Lieut.-General Sir H. Jeudwine) tells me the following:

Once, at the "Ginger-bread Chateau" which

HIS KINDNESS AND SENSE OF HUMOUR

was under constant shell fire, a few days after the German gas attack in April, 1916, Plumer was at luncheon with his Staff when a "Very Important Person Indeed from England" was descried approaching the door of the chateau to call on him. A day or two before a friend at home had sent out to one of his Staff a gift of some plovers' eggs and these were on the table. It was realized at once that to be found lunching on plovers' eggs in the midst of a very acute battle crisis would be to be damned for ever as sybarites totally unconcerned with the fate of the battle or the nation. The Corps Commander (General Plumer) rose to the situation. "Put them under the table," was his order, quickly rapped out. Under the table they went—the cloth was a long one reaching nearly to the floor and the reputations of the Corps Commander and his Staff were saved. The visitor stayed to luncheon, but the plovers' eggs stayed "put."

(I rather think that the very important person from England must have been Lord Kitchener.)

ANECDOTES OF KINDNESS

It is quite impossible for me to relate many of the hundreds of acts of kindness which have been sent to me from all over the world. They are all just typical of the man, but how he ever found time to do all these kind acts amazes me as one must remember he wrote all his letters himself. He hated a typewritten personal letter. He always said that a typewriter destroyed all person-ality. He answered all letters in his own hand-writing and almost always on the day of receipt. I have before me the copy of a letter of sympathy he wrote to a man in Australia telling him that

A NURSING SISTER'S LETTER

his son had been killed—an account of his meeting with a R.A.S.C. Corporal in a Divisional Artillery Wagon Lines who had been with him in the relief of Mafeking—a story from his old batman in the War who says “I could always tell when a big push was to be made. The General would be on his knees beside his bed when I brought his shaving water. He never acknowledged my coming in, nor turned an eye on me. He went right on”—a letter from a nursing sister in South Africa who writes me that she had always looked upon senior officers as “selfish pigs” till one day when she was on her way to Pretoria seated on the mail bags in an open truck. Colonel Plumer’s train drew up alongside at Wynburg Station. Colonel Plumer saw her and gave her a first-class compartment in his train. Late that night she was turned out at a small wayside station because “Boers were up the line.” Wondering what on earth to do next, she found that Colonel Plumer had thought it out. Part of his column were at this point, and as the train left, a young officer came forward and said he had instructions from the C.O. to look after her. He did too ; somehow persuaded an old Dutch woman to provide bed and food and the following morning when a real passenger train going in the required direction came along, he called for her, picked her up and carried her bodily through a sea of mud to her coach. When asked if that too was by Colonel Plumer’s instructions, he said that undoubtedly had he seen the mud he would have wished it. So much consideration made a lasting impression because it was in such marked contrast to what till then the sister supposed was to be expected of “Senior Officers.”

HIS KINDNESS AND SENSE OF HUMOUR

Here is another instance of the way in which, by kind acts, he endeared himself to those under him. One night in 1917 a subaltern was coming out of the line, very tired, and was making his way back to the rest billets of his battalion when he saw a car approaching. Thinking that it might be an A.S.C. car coming back from a ration dump he stood in the middle of the road and stopped it. To his great dismay the door opened and General Plumer got out. "Why did you stop my car?" said General Plumer. "I am very sorry," said the subaltern, "I had no idea that it was you." "Well, what did you want?" said the General. "I wanted a lift to my battalion rest billets," said the subaltern. "Hop in," said General Plumer, and drove him there.

He had, however, various ways of gaining the trust and affection of those around him. The following story sent me by the C.O. of a battalion which was on 1st June, 1917, practising in a back area for the attack on Messines on 7th June.

Soon after we had started on the second stage of the operations General Plumer's car drew up. He stopped and chatted whilst I explained what we were doing and then asked to borrow a horse and to watch one or two attempts. Following one reasonably good advance we commenced a second movement but, instead of being better, the line convolved on itself and supports and line formed what I used to describe as a "covey."

I asked permission to investigate and cantered back to report to him that we would have to wash out this attempt and start again as the men had seen a hare in its "form" and in the resulting

"I DIE IN NO FEAR"

excitement had entirely forgotten the imaginary crater.

General Plumer laughed at the men's estimate of the relative importance of the Messines Ridge attack and a hare and asked if we could spare ten minutes. I assented, whereupon he led a helter-skelter after the hare. Losing the hare he called off the hunt, and told the men that he hoped to see them go for the enemy with the same enthusiasm but reminded them that there were other troops involved and that attention to details was vital, so he would like to see one more really good rehearsal.

The men responded and the Army Commander went off, leaving behind him real affection for him as a man coupled with the feeling that for him to show such interest in details meant that we had a very important task ahead in taking the crater of Hill 60 and must not fail.

I am indebted to his Major-General Sir Guise Moore, his D.M.S. for the following story so characteristic of our Chief :

"It happened towards the close of the Great War that a subaltern named Moor, an old Cheltonian who had gained a V.C., fell sick with pneumonia and was in one of the Casualty Clearing Stations near Turcoing dying. The Army Commander desired me to go and see the lad, take him a message of hope and cheer and tell the lad how much he admired his pluck and gallantry and with a promise to go and see him later on. Alas, that visit was not for fulfilment, but the boy's face lit up at the message and he whispered, 'Tell the General I die in no fear of

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the hereafter and I would rather have died on the Field than in Hospital.' I gave the words as they were given me and the receiver was visibly affected."

The other which I quote is equally characteristic of his great sense of humour. Sir Guise Moore writes :

" When we reached Cologne I applied for five days' leave. The Army Commander sent for me to dine. After dinner he said, ' You have applied for leave. You are always on leave ! ' I looked at him and saw that twinkle followed by the smile. He then said, ' Your car is laid up, isn't it ? You shall have my car and don't let me hear of your not applying for leave in the future ? "

ANECDOTE

As head of the Intelligence Service in the Second Army we had Colonel Mitchell—a Canadian who is now head of the Faculty of Engineering in Toronto University—an exceedingly able man. He had been in a similar position in the Canadian Corps when I was B.G.G.S. of that Corps. The Chief had great faith in his deductions concerning the enemy dispositions and in his judgment. Some of the impressions formed by Colonel Mitchell I append below.

Among some of the most outstanding recollections I have of General Plumer are those of his presiding at his Army Conference of Corps Commanders, which at Cassel were held in the large room of his house overlooking the Belgian Plain to the north and west. This oblong room had a large table which could be extended to

DRAMATIC MEMORIES

considerable length—in my later years I remember it as more like a board-room in a large corporation with its director's table depending upon the size of the conference or the number of corps in the Army at the time (for instance, four in February, 1917, and seven in October, 1917), the table would be surrounded and crowded with the Corps Commanders and their senior staff officers, and the other seats around the walls of the room more than filled: usually a blackboard at one end on which oftentimes illustrations were done by the M.G.G.S. We all had our parts to play and sometimes the deliberations were exceedingly important and serious in the way of responsibilities. I oftentimes used to think as I sat there, how I wished I could retain in my memory the picture and the speeches, discussions and conversations which went on in that room, all of them, of course, secret. I often used to pull myself up with the thought of how history was being made in that room at that particular hour by the decisions which were being taken under the direction of General Plumer, surrounded by his Officers and Corps Commanders, with sometimes Division Commanders.

Previous to some of the great battles, like Messines, Menin Road, Broodseinde and Passchendaele, these conferences had many stiff hours and sometimes tense moments, and some of these have to me dramatic memories. In this connection General Plumer had a habit, which I think exhibited one of his greatest and most valuable characteristics, and that was that he would make sure before finally determining on a plan that everyone concerned in arriving at the decision, was in thorough agreement. It was more than

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a system or method to him, it oftentimes became a ceremony. As an instance, and I can remember many of them, on the occasion of determining the plans for the Battle of Broodseinde (4th October, 1917) there had been a long series of arguments, covering a good part of the morning, between corps commanders, their general staff officers and artillery generals, as to boundaries for attack and overlapping barrages and responsibilities concerning adjoining formations. The conference had temporarily broken up into small groups, but after a time it became obvious that they were ready to report and all re-assembled around the long table. General Plumer, from his seat at the head, sitting erect with his back to the main window, could see by the attention and the expressions on the faces of his corps commanders and staff officers that unanimity had been reached on these the last of the points in question. He then said, "Have you reached an agreement that is satisfactory?" and after a rather general expression he proceeded deliberately to take an individual poll of his corps commanders. The dialogue went something like this, the Army Commander looking intently at his Corps Commander as he put his question, and the Corps Commander loudly and clearly giving his answer as if he were on the parade ground: "Hamilton-Gordon, you agree?" "Yes, sir!" "Godley, you agree?" "Yes, sir!" "Morland, you agree?" "Yes, sir!" "Currie, you agree?" "Yes, sir!" And so on around the seven corps commanders. General Plumer, still erect, finally replied, "That is all, gentlemen, thank you very much, the conference is ended," and with that, flicked his eye-glass which finally dramatically

" A MAN OF PEACE "

concluded the morning. Thus it was that General Plumer got that extraordinary co-operation and determined adherence to plans agreed upon, unswerving loyalty and cheerful support from all of those in responsible places in his Army, while, at the same time maintaining a rigid control, once battle plans and other arrangements were agreed upon.

General Plumer, firm, determined and rigid as a soldier though he was, was ever mindful of his own troops, and underneath it all always seemed to me to have a soft heart ; sometimes I think he had difficulty repressing his kindness of heart and his sympathy, when he knew he should be firm and exacting. Neither was he bloodthirsty in so far as the enemy was concerned, but in the same manner he knew, as we all knew in those days, that it was a war of attrition and that we should all set ourselves to the task which is the first principle in warfare, of destroying the enemy by any means we could. Recollection of this has often recurred to me and indeed on several occasions has been brought to attention since the War by those concerned. A short time after the Battle of Messines the Archbishop of York (Dr. Lang, now Archbishop of Canterbury), who was a great friend of General Plumer, came out to France and spent several days with him at Cassel and in the Second Army area. It was well known at that time that he was " a man of peace." It was his first visit to the front and General Plumer took some pains to see that he was properly " conducted and shown things." It appears that one of the show places which he had been promised was Intelligence, and consequently the Army Commander himself brought him into my huge

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room (the former dining-room of the Casino) with its many tables and maps on the walls, diagrams, models and other gadgets. General Plumer practically turned me loose on the Archbishop with the injunction that I should show him everything, withholding nothing, and that his discretion could be relied upon. I hardly knew how to interpret this, but with an opportunity I got a few minutes later I asked General Plumer if he meant it literally and if I was to load this peaceable man up with all the bloodthirsty and German-killing methods and devices we employed. His reply was, "Yes, tell him everything, I don't care how terrible you make it." "Shall I tell him that our great object these days is to kill Germans?" "Yes, by all means—it will do him good." The Archbishop was greatly intrigued and after a two-hour session before dinner he came back of his own accord at nine-thirty and stayed in Intelligence until nearly midnight, full of interest and displaying special ability in understanding what was shown and told him. General Plumer came in about ten-thirty and tried to get the Archbishop home, but did not succeed and finally General Plumer said, "Well, I am for bed, you can stay here as long as you like." (The Archbishop was in Toronto the following year and gave an address to a very large audience in which he made mention of the foregoing, perhaps not so pointedly.)

The members of Second Army Staff who were present at Army Headquarters at the conference on the night of Friday, 9th November, 1917, would always carry a remarkable and moving memory of General Plumer as he stood before them to bid them good-bye on the eve of his

FAREWELL TO THE 2ND ARMY STAFF

departure for the Italian theatre. Two days before he had suddenly received orders to go to Italy and take command. Since the evening the order came, there had been feverish activity in connection with this change, although General Plumer's move affected only a small number of his Staff which went with him. We were still fighting the Battle of Passchendaele and the last operation was set for the following morning, Saturday, with zero at six-thirty. After the completion of the operation (which resulted in the capture of the Passchendaele position and its consolidation) General Plumer was to hand over to General Rawlinson, Fourth Army, he himself leaving at noon *en route* for Italy accompanied by General Harington and several others. (I, under General Plumer's instructions, went to London and spent three or four days very strenuously at the War Office collecting information and instructions, following General Plumer to Italy four days later.) General Plumer's farewell to his Second Army Staff, as assembled that night at 9.0 o'clock, was one of the most touching scenes I have ever experienced. He thanked them for their great services, for their co-operation and their loyalty. He gave them the advice of a father, such as he might be expected to do, and then attempted to say good-bye. It was only an attempt, because he broke down, ended with a few incoherent words and walked from the room, erect as if on parade, but with tears rolling down his cheeks. Such was the man with the kind of spirit which endeared him to everybody about him and who worked for him.

I always like to think of General Plumer in his attitude toward religion. It seemed to be just

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a part of himself. He was a devout Christian gentleman and it seemed to form a very important part of his personality, his perspective and his background. This was well known amongst his Staff officers at Army Headquarters and all through the Army. I think it had the effect of interesting many of his Staff officers in that side of their personal life. He went to Divine Service nearly every Sunday morning at Cassel, to the little hall which was our church on the hill-side toward the east, and one of my cherished memories of my year at Cassel was the Army Commander and his Staff officers of all ranks and the N.C.O.'s and men, servants and grooms, walking quietly and earnestly to morning service, rain or shine. I can see General Plumer, his Major-General, General Staff and his other Staff officers sitting in the front benches of the little church in a solemn service conducted by the Army Chaplain, all of us oblivious that we were in the middle of a great war. I can see the Army Commander and his Staff officers kneeling on the hard floor of the little church taking communion, just as it might be in some village church in England. These were somehow things apart from war and they seem to weave some kind of luminous atmosphere around the Commander of the Second Army. This, to me, was one of my greatest prides; to serve under and in close staff contact with a Christian man of this kind.

I agree so much with Brig.-General Mitchell's views. He was indeed a Christian man. I know from our Second Army A. C. G., the Rev. F. I. Anderson, how the Chief used to inspire all the padres in the Army. How he used them to send a special message of courage, hope, cheer and comfort to units.

REST AND RECREATION

I am told that no Chaplain who attended the Chief's Conferences for Chaplains only, ever forgot them. I was never allowed in. His messages of advice, shot through and through with touches of humour: his courteous way of expressing the hope that he was not touching on ground of a spiritual nature which was more their province than his: and then finally a few brief words sending them all away realizing that their Chief believed in the power of prayer.

The value of recreation, games, concerts, cinemas, lantern lectures—anything to give the minds of officers and all other ranks a change when possible from the ever-present saturating thought of war—was a subject he pressed upon the Chaplains. They could do much in this direction. Under his encouragement, and with the help given by Staff officers and others by his orders, there came into being the many Recreation and Rest Huts in the Salient near the front line, the large underground Rest Club beneath the old Civil Prison in Ypres itself, and many a centre of rest and entertainment in the back areas.

The same care and thought for the morale and comfort and happiness of the troops showed itself in the winter conditions in N. Italy in 1917-18, on the Piave river, and in the villages round about Padua.

Thus in countless ways—in dug-outs, in huts, in hangars, in billets, and at Padua even, in the Beethoven Halle with its beautiful organ—Chaplains found contact with thousands of men, often better men than themselves, and discovered their own best manhood in a strange environment, doing the job so urgently asked of them by the Commander-in-Chief.

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Not even the possibility of football and cricket was outside the Commander-in-Chief's vision during lulls in the fighting. Was there ever such a Rugger match as that between the All Blacks (N.Z. Div.) and the Welsh Division in a field a little behind Poperinghe ! A good sprinkling of internationals on both sides—the Welsh XV led by a Padre international forward—caused that wartime match to draw together such a crowd of khaki-clad onlookers as would have made the enemy gasp in surprise at the manner in which British troops could mingle their innate love of games with their prowess at holding a muddy Salient !

CHAPTER XXI

INNS OF COURT REGIMENT

AMONGST Lord Plumer's many activities after the War must be included his great interest in the Inns of Court Regiment. He was made Honorary Colonel of the Regiment in November, 1928, an honour which he appreciated very much. I am indebted to the present commanding officer for the following which shows not only his keen interest in the Regiment but his keen sense of humour.

“ He took a very keen interest in the Regiment and I remember on one occasion he announced his intention of inspecting the Regiment at training at Petworth, and told me to prepare schemes for both the Cavalry Squadron and the Infantry Companies, and to bring them up to his house for him to vet. Having seen the ground I prepared the schemes but took the precaution of having them looked over by the War Office before presenting them to the Field-Marshal. He passed one, but the other ‘won’t do at all,’ and there and then he dictated off the map a scheme which, although he was too ill to witness it himself, worked extraordinarily well. I am not commenting on his power to write a scheme, but on the

INNS OF COURT REGIMENT

fact that a Field-Marshal should take the trouble to write a scheme for one Squadron of Cavalry and two Companies of Infantry. Unfortunately, when he came down to inspect, he was taken ill at the local hotel, but even then he sent for Goldsworthy of the War Office who had come down as his Staff Officer, and myself and explained to us from his bed exactly how the scheme was to be run that morning.

"On one occasion when he dined with the Regiment, we had been discussing our respective schools, Eton and Harrow, and generally the feeling between the two schools. Very foolishly I remarked, 'I don't think the feeling between the two schools is as bad as it was,' to which he replied, 'I hope it is.' Having delivered this blow, he at once told a story against himself to the effect that he and Stanley Baldwin were watching a match at Lord's while Baldwin was boasting of his Old Harrovian Cabinet, at which the Field-Marshal remarked, 'Ah, but Eton governs the Colonies; we have the Governors of Australia, etc. etc.,' to which Baldwin replied, 'But, Field-Marshal, I did not deny that you were ornamental.'

"One other remark, which I happened to hear at Ascot, is perhaps typical. It was shortly after his return from what I imagine must have been a fairly strenuous time in Palestine; a gushing female addressed the Field-Marshal as follows: 'Oh, Lord Plumer, how nice to see you again, where have you been all this time?' to which he replied, 'They thought I wanted a rest, so they sent me to Palestine.'

AT THE FUNERAL

“ At the Field-Marshal’s funeral, the Regiment provided two Squadrons of Cavalry, while the Infantry provided the Guard on the coffin at the Guards’ Chapel.”

CHAPTER XXII

LORD PLUMER'S LAST MESSAGE TO THE ARMY

HIS last charge to me was, "Build up Toc H in the Army." It is often the case that soldiers and others when their services are no longer required in their professions find themselves lost without occupation. It is always a comfort to me that, when I finish my Army life shortly, I shall have the above task always before me. It will indeed be a labour of love and though I can never hope to carry it out as he would have wished, yet I sincerely hope that I may be able to drive a few pegs into the Toc H road which he so much desired to see.

Before examining Lord Plumer's connection with Toc H and his reason for giving me the above-mentioned task, I am bound for the benefit of my readers to answer the following question. What is Toc H? Having been brought up with and in Toc H ever since its infancy, and it was born and bred in the Second Army, I must confess that when I am asked that question, I often feel tempted to say, "Have you ever heard of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides?" As I have so often said, I look upon Toc H as the greatest factor which we got out of the Great War. It was born in sorrow and suffering, just as the Nursing Service was the outcome of Florence Nightingale's heroic

THE SPIRIT OF TOC H

work in the Crimean War—just as the Boy Scout movement was the outcome of the South African War in order to teach the younger generation the meaning of unselfishness and service to others—in other words to Honour God and Honour the King. To those who have never heard of Toc H, I would say that a very fine young officer in the Rifle Brigade, Gilbert Talbot, was killed at Ypres in 1915. He was the son of the Bishop of Winchester. In his memory a House was started in Poperinghe, called Talbot House, Toc H for short being the signallers' way of expressing T. The founder padre, the Rev. P. B. Clayton (known to all as Tubby), the wonderful man who has been behind this great movement and has seen it spread throughout our Empire and far beyond it, organized that House in Poperinghe as a Home or Haven where everyone was welcome and where many a weary man in those terrible days found not only rest but a certain amount of comfort and lots of good cheer. The old House at Poperinghe had something about it which words cannot describe. It was really what we know now as the spirit of Toc H.

It may not be easy for the present generation to realize that the life of everyone who was engaged in the defence of the Ypres Salient in those days whether in front or back areas was in danger and that when faced with danger the majority of men, both great and small, turn to God. Why should anyone deny or hide it? People may do so in peace time, but they certainly do not do so in War. They not only thank God, but they are ready to turn to Him. In Toc H at Poperinghe they were able to do so. At the top of this House of good cheer they were able to

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climb up a ladder into a sort of loft—called the Upper Room—and in this room they could get rest and comfort and in this Upper Room thousands of our great and glorious men received communion and often their last communion from Tubby Clayton and his loyal assistants. Many a man spent his last night on earth in Toc H. Those of us who saw Toc H being built know what it meant. Lord Plumer loved Toc H in Poperinghe. Lord Cavan realized its great work and that is why our Patron—the Prince of Wales—who was then Staff Captain to the XIV Corps under Lord Cavan—has always supported it. He knew Toc H and saw its value and has never spared himself since to help forward its work. I quote from our Second Army padre—the Rev. F. I. Anderson—when I say that he climbed up that staircase to the Upper Room one afternoon and found the Army Commander there all alone. The latter merely remarked “A good place for rest and quiet after a particularly heavy day.”

Only those who served in the Second Army in the defence of the Ypres Salient know what Toc H in Poperinghe did and meant to them. There was something about the spirit of that House which just caught all who knew it. Then the War ended and with it that grand spirit of service and unselfishness by which the Nation had won through. Instead of the Nation all pulling together on the rope by which we had won the War with everyone at his or her best, bickering and petty jealousies—unknown during the War—began to creep in again. During this time Tubby Clayton had a vision. Could not that grand spirit which we had seen and felt during the War be extended to the younger generation? He con-

THE FOUR POINTS

sulted Lord Plumer and others and from those consultations has emerged the Toc H of to-day and my readers will ask "What is the Toc H of to-day?" It is simply and solely a movement to help the younger generation to carry on the memory and unselfishness of those gallant men—whom we call our elder brethren—the men who gave and gave cheerfully their all in order to save the younger generation from having to go through what they went through. Those elder brethren are represented by a million little white crosses. Does the Nation to-day remember them? In Toc H we do. We try to carry on their cross. At all our meetings we say:

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."

Some people have an idea that Toc H is some mysterious and secret organization full of hidden signs and symbols and others that it is an ex-soldiers' organization. It is nothing whatever of the sort. It has just the following objects in view. These are what we call the four points of the compass:

1. To think fairly.
2. To love widely.
3. To witness humbly.
4. To build bravely.

There are those who think that it is some sort of religious body. It is not. It is simply and solely that we believe and trust in God and that we are always out to help others on the road of life first, and ourselves last.

It is part of our Toc H prayer to be allowed to leap with joy to the service of others. We are really a band of Christian people who do not

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intend to let the memory and example of those million little white crosses die. Do not they represent the finest example of "Unselfish Service?" And so Toc H has been formed to help the younger generation to be unselfish. Toc H to-day consists of thousands and thousands of members throughout the world, all imbued with the spirit of unselfishness, ready at any moment and in every action to help others. It consists of groups and branches and Houses (called Marks) in every part of our Empire and beyond. In these Houses or Marks, young fellows live together happily and cheaply and from which they go to and from their daily work and in their spare time doing something to help others. I have visited very many and have never failed to be impressed by the spirit prevailing. To many parents sending their boys to their first situations abroad and faced with the temptations at that age, Toc H has been a real boon.

Anyone who has witnessed what we call a Birthday Festival in the Albert Hall or elsewhere, when our Patron gives a new lamp to branches which have earned it and at which the lamps of the older branches are relit, will never forget the scene. Toc H is open to all denominations and to all classes of people. Toc H does not advertise or ask anyone to join. We merely say "Come and see it." Now when Toc H has meant so much to Lord Plumer and to such people as Lord Forster and Lord Halifax and counts within its numbers many distinguished Admirals (including the present Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, Sir W. W. Fisher) and many distinguished Generals and Members of Parliament and all professions, why is it that the younger

TOC H AND THE ARMY

generation of officers of the Army show little or no interest? I am quite aware that there was some misunderstanding at one time as regards rank, but Lord Plumer himself got that made quite clear which the following letter issued by the Army Council in February, 1930, confirms :

“ It has been represented to the Army Council by Field-Marshal Viscount Plumer and the Reverend P. B. Clayton, in an interview which took place on the 29th January, 1930, between the above mentioned and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Adjutant-General to the Forces, that an impression has got abroad that officers and men of the Army are, by reason of their profession, cut off from active membership of Toc H. It may be as well, therefore, to state here, quite distinctly, that there is nothing either in the obligations of an Army career or the membership of Toc H which are antagonistic. Quite the reverse. Toc H was born of the Army in War, and there is no reason why officers and men should not exercise, should they so desire, full membership in peace as they did during the War. Nor is there any more reason why an officer who is a member of Toc H should not meet a private soldier who is also a member of Toc H in the course of their activities in connection with the fellowship, than there is that he should not play football, cricket or any other game that is, as is well known, played by officers and other ranks in their ordinary every-day regimental life.

“ The Army Council feel that it would be unfortunate indeed if the present ignorance of the aims and objects of Toc H were perpetuated by

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its parent, the British Army, and wish it to be understood that, for their part, they desire once and for all to state that there is nothing in the constitution of either to prevent officers and other ranks of the Army from becoming members of Toc H. Those members of Toc H who joined that fellowship when at school—as so many do—may carry on their membership throughout their Army career, and others may join without any misgivings.

“It will be kind of you if you will cause the contents of this letter to be made known, in such manner as seems best to you, to all Os.C. units in your Command.”

It is pleasing to note that the present Q.M.G. to the Forces—Lieut.-General Sir R. S. May—is a prominent member of Toc H.

I am sorry to have to say that the result of that letter has been poor. The progress in the Navy, however, has been far in excess of the Army and when the Fleets come to Gibraltar it is a delight to see the interest taken in Toc H by our sailor comrades. Our weekly gatherings are packed.

I am quite sure that Lord Plumer, in his charge to me, felt that the way in which he had been able to attract people of all kinds to him and the way in which he had gained their trust and affection, was in a great measure due to being imbued with the Toc H spirit. By that I mean that such words as jealousy, bitterness, pettiness, etc., never entered into his vocabulary.

He realized to the full how human the British soldier is and what a good friend he can be. Never did he pass a soldier without a kind and

OUR FUTURE LEADERS

cheery word. Such were some of the qualities which made up his great power of command.

I grant that it is given to few to be able to gain the trust and affection of subordinates as he did, but we can all of us try to follow on his lines and that is what Toc H offers us. Toc H branches exist both at Woolwich and Sandhurst and I am very pleased at having been asked by the Commandants of both establishments to speak to the cadets on Toc H when I next go home on leave. Those lads are on the eve of being entrusted with men's lives. They are our future leaders.

One thing is quite certain and that is that you cannot learn really to command men out of a book. You may learn all the drill, tactics and Regulations ever written and you may rule men with an iron and inhuman discipline and it may take you to a certain point but no further. I have seen it tried by officers in all ranks from subaltern to general. Some years ago a late commanding officer said to me, "Tell me why with all my good reports did I never get any further?" I told him, "Because you were never human." A time may come in every officer's life, as it has to thousands, when he may find himself in a very tight place, face to face with death. All will depend on those under him. If he really holds their trust and confidence the little extra bit that men are capable of giving to a Commander may turn the scale.

That is why I would urge all officers who aspire to command men to seize every chance of getting to know those under them. I think it is equally important for employers of men in every walk of life. Before the War, we in the Army were much to blame. We lived in a circle of our own,

HIS LAST MESSAGE

in many cases thinking that our little world was all that mattered. The best lesson I ever learnt was when posted as one of the Regular Officers to the West Riding Territorial Division on its arrival in France as G.S.O. where I met people in every profession, I soon realized in what a narrow circle we had lived. Some years afterwards when holding the Northern Command I got to know the true value of the Durham miner and the Yorkshireman. Some people may think it is derogatory to do so. Some people think that Toc H means officers and private soldiers calling each other by their Christian names and slapping each other on the back. It does not and never will. I have visited Toc H in many parts of the world and have visited every Toc H in London and in the North of England and I can faithfully say that I have never had anything but the greatest civility and kindness wherever I have been. I ask no one to join Toc H. That is against our principles. I merely say that Lord Plumer believed in it and loved it and it helped him. His last words to me, "Build up Toc H in the Army," were not said lightheartedly. I pass them on to my readers with this added—"Come and see for yourselves."

SUMMARY

H.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth*,
17 June, 1935.

BEFORE writing the last few words of this Memoir, I must tell my readers that I am writing in the Commander-in-Chief's cabin in the Flagship, *Queen Elizabeth* in which I am travelling to England as the honoured guest of Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher, G.C.B., with the ships of the Mediterranean Fleet on their way to attend the King's Review of the Combined Fleets next month. I can imagine no more historic surroundings in which to write. Within a few yards of me is the historic table at which Lord Beatty demanded the surrender of the German Fleet on 16th November, 1918. On the wall hangs Sir John Lavery's picture of the British and German Admirals seated at that table. We are now entering the Bay of Biscay. There is something so grand and majestic in this historic Flagship cutting her way through this blue sea with not a cloud in the sky. From the Admiral's stern-walk I can see the *Ramillies*, *Resolution* and *Revenge* following, with the *London*, *Devonshire* and *Australia* behind. Destroyer and Submarine Flotillas still farther behind. What a glorious sight! Sir William Fisher is to command both Fleets at the Review by the King before he hauls down his Flag as Commander-in-Chief Mediter-

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ranean Fleet, a post which he has filled with such splendid success. I have mentioned the above as I feel that I am writing in an atmosphere of History—of a period when Admirals and Commanders of Armies were making that History. Many have been taken from us, but those of us who were privileged to serve under them know what we owe to them.

In this Memoir of my old Chief I have tried to give a picture of the Field-Marshal in his home and public life. I am deeply grateful to his many friends and admirers throughout the Empire who have sent me information. The Field-Marshal left no Diary or Notes. It is difficult to sum up his life. Lord Baden-Powell, who was a great friend of his, tells me that his life can be summed up in one word—"Reliability." Major-General Sir John Moore, who was with him all the South African War, sums up his life as one of "Faithfulness." Both terms so true. To these I would add "Loyalty." I think that he was incapable of being disloyal in either thought, word or deed and I am sure that that will be the verdict of all those who knew him. Whether as the young regimental officer or as the young adventurer in Matabeleland or the untiring Column Commander in South Africa, the trainer of troops in peace, the Quartermaster-General of the Army, the Commander of the Second Army holding the Ypres Salient against all comers, the Governor of Malta or the High Commissioner in Palestine, the same great qualities won him through. By his kindness, sense of humour and dead-straightness he won the trust of all, no matter what race or creed. His policy of "Be Fair" was proved up to the hilt. "Unselfishness" and "Service

THE END

for others " stand out in every action of his great career.

May I dare hope that some of his actions and methods, which I have tried to describe, may be an example to the younger generation. It can have been given to few men to be able to gain the trust and affection of all with whom he came in contact as he did. It is a quality for which we should all strive if we wish to command men. The kind and cheery word, the word of encouragement and appreciation, the " good morning " and the handshake were all important factors in his great life. It was with deep sorrow that we saw him getting more and more feeble in the last months of his life. His brain remained active to the end, but his physical strength had given out. He had given of his best always. He never spared himself. It is probably right to say that he never recovered from the strain of Palestine.

The end came on 16 July, 1932. Our hearts went out to Lady Plumer who had shared his joys and sorrows for forty-eight years, and to the whole family. His remains rest in the Warriors' Chapel in Westminster Abbey. I was privileged to carry his insignia in the procession from the Guards' Chapel in Wellington Barracks to the Abbey. One can never forget that march and the faces of the thousands of old soldiers who had served under him in various campaigns and who lined the route. It was a very touching scene. Their feelings of reverence and affection were so obvious. They were feeling, as I was, that we had lost not only a great Commander but a great English gentleman and a great friend.

I have been urged to enter into controversial questions concerning the late War, especially

SUMMARY

with reference to the Passchendaele operations, and perhaps many readers will be disappointed that I have not done so. I have purposely not done so. I have tried to clear up matters in which Lord Plumer may have been misrepresented, but one must remember that "Dignity" was the keynote of his life and "Dignity" must be the keynote of his Memoir.

As I stood on the bridge of the *Queen Elizabeth* this morning and watched the Fleet I could not help thinking of the first Admiral who hoisted his flag in this great ship just twenty years ago—Admiral Sir John de Robeck—who was a very dear friend of Lord Plumer's and whose kindness to me in Constantinople I shall always treasure, when the present Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir William Fisher, was his Chief of Staff.

Our two Chiefs were men of very similar character, both loved by all who had the privilege to know and serve them. Both great God-fearing men who steered only one course in life and that was dead straight. It is one of those happy things in life that their respective Chiefs of Staff should be rolling through the Bay together in a heavy swell and able to say :

" Whatever the weather,
And often it's rotten,
There are certain old friends
Who will ne'er be forgotten.

APPENDIX

FAMILY RECORD.

FIELD-MARSHAL SIR HERBERT CHARLES
ONslow PLUMER, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,
G.B.E., son of the late Hall Plumer, of Malpas
Lodge, Torquay, *b.* 1857. Suakim Expedition, 1884 ;
Matabele campaign, 1896 ; in command of a Corps of
Mounted Rifles which he raised S. Africa, 1899-1902 ;
Commanded Rhodesian Force, European War, 1915-19 ;
Commanded V Corps and Second Army ; Commanded
British Forces in Italy, November, 1917-March, 1918.
Dispatches several times, Legion of Honour, G.C.M.G.,
G.C.V.O., G.C.B., French Croix de Guerre with Palms,
Belgian Croix de Guerre, Orders of St. Maurice and
St. Lazarus of Italy and Leopold of Belgium, Grand
Cordon of Order of Rising Sun of Japan, American D.S.M.,
thanked by Parliament, promoted Field-Marshal or
Baron, granted £30,000 ; Q.M.G. to the Forces
(3rd Mily. Member Army Council), 1904-5 ; in command
of 5th Division Irish Command 1906-9 ; G.O.C.-in-C.
Northern Command, 1911-15 ; A.D.C. General to His
Majesty The King 1917-19 ; Governor and C.-in-C.
Malta, 1919-24 ; High Commissioner and C.-in-C.
Palestine, 1924-8 ; also High Commissioner for Trans-
jordan, 1928. Created Baron Plumer of Messines and of
Bilton, Co. York, (peerage of United Kingdom), 1919, and
Viscount Plumer of Messines and of Bilton, Co. York, 1919.
Married, 1884, Annie Constance, O.B.E. (a D.G. St. J.),
youngest daughter of the late George Goss, of 10 Park
Crescent, Portland Place, *d.* 1932. Succeeded by his son
Thomas Hall Rokeby, M.C., 2nd Viscount and present

APPENDIX

peer, *b.* May 17, 1890. Served with the Canadian Corps, *m.* 1919, Ann Monica Georgiana, daughter of the late Brig.-General Henry Tempest Hicks, C.B. Has three daughters living: Hon. Ann Cynthia Veronica Tempest, Hon. Daphne Mary Christal, Hon. Rosemary Diana.

Present peer has three sisters living: Hon. Eleanor Mary, appointed Tutor to Women Students', King's College, 1919, and Warden of Mary Ward Settlement, 1924; was Warden of St. Andrew's Hall, Reading, 1927-31. Hon. Sybil Margaret, O.B.E., Secretary Kensington District British Red Cross Society; O.B.E. (Civil); *m.*, 1916, Major A. S. Orpen, O.B.E., East Lancashire Regiment Reserve and has issue living, Louise Elizabeth Mary, *b.* 1923; Anne Margaret, *b.* 1924. Hon. Marjorie Constance, *m.*, 1920, Major William Halliley Brooke, M.C., West Yorkshire Regiment (T. A. Reserve), and has issue living, Michael, *b.*, 1921.

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